

LITERARY INFLUENCE IN BRITISH HISTORY

A HISTORICAL SKETCH

BY THE

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"Then, too, appeared the first faint dawn of that noble literature the most splendid and the most durable of the many glories of England."

MACAULAY'S "History of England."

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE influence of public speakers is perhaps more apparent than that of poets, historians, and novelists. Yet these latter are shown by recent experience, especially in Britain, to have greater influence in legislation and on public opinion than is usually believed. In this republished and revised volume I endeavour to trace the influence of literature in British history, with the hope that the book may be of use to readers not familiar with larger works on the subject.

A. S. G. CANNING.

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LITERARY INFLUENCE IN BRITISH HISTORY



CHAPTER I

LITERARY INFLUENCES OF JUDEA, GREECE, AND ROME

IN examining literary history, Judea, Greece, and Rome seem pre-eminent for almost exclusive influence on modern European civilisation. Greek and Roman literature are historically connected, and Greece, the first in intellectual achievement, fell under the dominion of Rome. The religions of both were almost the same, while Roman conquest, comprising all western Europe, bore with it the treasures of Greek learning, combined with its own civilising, enlightened influence. France, Spain, England, and Germany, destined to become the greatest nations in the world, alike submitted to Roman arms, and with their submission disappeared their ancient religions, and most of their historic traditions. Roman or Latin literature, history, legislation, language, and

ideas, comprising much that was borrowed from Greece, gradually prevailed throughout Europe.¹

The most celebrated countries whose ancient histories were long comparatively unknown, were Assyria, Persia, and Egypt. Except from occasional allusions to them in the Jewish Scriptures, their histories were long concealed, though to some extent preserved in the literature of ancient Greece. The poets and historians of that intellectual country are still among modern Europeans, not only the studies of the young, but attract statesmen, travellers, theologians, and even novelists, in their translation or examination.

The Jews, amid the general idolatry, polytheism, and mystical worship of the ancient world, transmitted through generations their ancient Deism utterly unchanged by the progress of time. Absorbed in their own thoughts, interests, privileges, and local history, this isolated race stood apart from the rest of the world, showing little interest in other races of men.² This indifference was equalled by the indifference of other nations towards them. Modern

¹ "Victorious Rome was herself subdued by the arts of Greece. Those immortal writers who still command the admiration of modern Europe soon became the favourite object of study and imitation in Italy. The love of letters was fashionable among the subjects of Hadrian and the Antonines. It was diffused over the whole extent of their empire, the most northern tribes of Britons had acquired a taste for rhetoric. Homer as well as Virgil were transcribed and studied on the banks of the Rhine and Danube."—Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Chapter II.

² Milman's "Histories of the Jews and of Christianity."

historians express wonder at the ignorance of both Greeks and Romans about the literature of the Jews.¹

The Romans inherited not only the religion and territory, but the literature, and to some extent the arts, of Greece. Athens was the admiration of her Roman conquerors, while Judea remained apparently excluded from the curiosity, learning, and enterprise of the ancient world, which it was yet destined to overcome in religious interest, importance, and conversion. The Romans by their rule over Assyria, Greece, Egypt, and Judea acquired all the revealed knowledge and learning of the ancient world, while their conquests, travels, and inquiries extended their influence throughout countries previously unknown.

Their vast empire thus included the most fertile parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, in addition to the dominion of their Greek predecessors. Throughout this grand empire the brilliant Roman intellect reigned supreme. It appeared alike in legal enactment, geographical examination, historical inquiry, and practical improvement in almost everything connected with human welfare.²

The rise of Christianity and its complete conquest of Roman Paganism, mingled the three nations of Greeks, Romans, and Jews in complete intellectual supremacy over the educated world, while the Christians, extinguishing Paganism throughout its former

¹ Macaulay's "Essay on History."

² "The firm edifice of Roman power was raised and preserved by the wisdom of ages. The general principle of government was wise, simple, and beneficent."—"Decline and Fall," Ch. II.

political dominion, yet cultivated and studied its splendid literature with increasing admiration. From this combination of Christian knowledge with the classic elegance, learning, and genius of Greece and Rome, arose the mediæval and modern literature of Europe.

European Christians, when triumphant over the Roman Empire, had thus the literature of Greece and Rome with that of Judea at their command for study, comparison, and instruction. So vast an amount of history, poetry, tradition, and philosophy gave immense and unequalled information to Christian minds. The learning and wisdom of both Greeks and Romans and the religious history of the Jews were for the first time combined throughout Europe for Christian instruction.

English literature is called by an eminent contributor to it "the most splendid and the most durable of the many glories of England."¹ Its excellence is due partly indeed to cultivation of classic literary models, and also to vast information derived through foreign conquest, travel, and communication. When the results of persevering, uninterrupted study at home are added to those of research and exploration abroad, English literary acquisitions appear unrivalled.

England for many centuries never lay "at the proud foot of a conqueror."² While her domestic peace has been for many years less disturbed than

¹ Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. 1st.

² Shakespeare's "King John."

that of most European nations, her vast conquered territories, unlike those of Spain and Portugal, mostly obey her rule. The great facilities, inducements, and rewards thereby offered to enterprising travellers enable them by antiquarian, scientific, or scholastic researches, as well as by military and naval triumphs, to enrich fellow-countrymen in almost every department of human knowledge. The vast discoveries made by British travellers in lands unknown to the ancient world have, in London especially, been added to the grand inheritance of classic learning, which centuries of domestic peace enable England to enjoy in intellectual security.

Macaulay's expression about the durability of English literature indicates that being founded alike on classic learning and the Jewish Scriptures, it has through centuries derived aid, addition, and enlightenment from the efforts of geographers, the voyages of travellers, the researches and studies of antiquaries and scholars, and even from the results of military conquest. England's insular position, her complete independence of foreign influence, her maritime ascendancy over the classic Mediterranean, and all those newly discovered oceans which separated the new world from the old, her retained supremacy over all conquests and colonies except the United States of America, all these practical and peculiar advantages to her political power, have in various ways confirmed her intellectual greatness.

In many early specimens of British literature the Roman Catholic influence which then comprised all

the Christianity of western Europe is very apparent.¹ Legends, traditions, anecdotes, as well as writings of Christian saints and martyrs, were generally studied and often implicitly believed. The Church "the Roman Empire over again"² united some amount of Pagan civilisation, history, and art with the Christian doctrine, communicated from Judea to her Roman sovereign.³ The learning, knowledge, and wisdom of ancient Rome were thus historically connected with the first authentic version of Christianity.

Rome, the political ruler of Athens, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, became in every sense the head and centre of intellectual supremacy. The complete extinction of Paganism throughout the Roman Empire enabled its Christian successor to admire and preserve its noble literature without the least fear of thereby restoring its religious ideas. Christianity seems to have replaced the faith of Jupiter more rapidly than it effaced the old religion of northern and western Europe.

¹ "Even the spiritual supremacy arrogated by the Pope was in the dark ages productive of far more good than evil. Its effect was to unite the nations of western Europe in one great commonwealth, Learning followed in the train of Christianity."—Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. 1st.

² Dean Milman's "History of Christianity."

³ "The Church has many times been compared by divines to the Ark of which we read in the Book of Genesis, but never was the resemblance more perfect than during that evil time when she alone rode amidst the darkness and tempest on the deluge beneath which all the great works of ancient power lay entombed, bearing within her that feeble germ from which a second and more glorious civilisation was to spring."—Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. 1st.

Many years after Christian supremacy, there remained a belief in fairies and witchcraft, apparently connected with the ancient worship, yet which lingered even in some learned minds during centuries of established Christianity. But Paganism evidently vanished from the hearts and minds of all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, and seems never to have revived even in remote districts.

Christianity throughout that vast dominion became not only supreme but popular. The ignorant as well as the comparatively learned embraced it with an earnest enthusiasm which the previous fanciful Paganism had probably never aroused. Hence the most devout early Christians studied, preserved, and transmitted Pagan literature to a Christian posterity, while either effacing or neglecting all traces of the ancient faith of northern Europe.

Greek and Roman literature, carefully preserved by Christian monks, together with the Scripture history and a few local traditions, for centuries comprised nearly all the literary knowledge of Great Britain.¹

The indignation against Jews which the New Testament for centuries excited among Christians practically destroyed that admiration for them which the Old Testament was calculated to arouse. While some learned Christians admired David's psalms, and respected Abraham and Moses, their Jewish descen-

¹ "Nothing in the early existence of Britain indicated the greatness which she was destined to attain. She was subjugated by the Roman arms, but she received only a faint tincture of Roman arts and letters."—Macaulay's "History," Vol. 1st.

dants and co-religionists were much more associated in most Christian minds with the rigid priests, Annas and Caiaphas, executing the founder of Christianity for the sake of preserving their ancient Deism, which they accused Him of deserting.¹ Thence arose hatred and persecution of the Jews in Christian countries, where yet praises of Moses, Abraham, and David were uttered alike by Christian and Jewish clergy.

As Roman civilisation spread chiefly westward, the partially verified works of classic historians, geographers, poets, and philosophers were soon preferred by all intelligent British minds to the vague, mysterious, practically useless legends of their own country, which apparently lingered longest in the Highlands of Scotland.²

These traditions, however, though perhaps partly true, being unsupported by historical proof, political authority, or literary vindication, became almost fabulous through time. Shakespeare and Scott mention some of them in their works, but merely in interesting plays, poems, or romances, not as historical facts.³

Legends of Christian saints and martyrs, stories of witchcraft, fairy tales, and poetical praises of the Crusades gradually extended British literary know-

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages"; also Dean Milman's "History of Latin Christianity."

² Gibbon's remarks on "Ossian's Poems," "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Vol. 1st.

³ Shakespeare's "King Lear" and "Cymbeline," Scott's historical novels, and "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border."

ledge. The Crusades united real warfare with the charms of music and poetry, and were melodiously advocated by foreign minstrels, as well as eagerly sanctioned by the Christian clergy. The influence of the former over some European kings, especially Richard I. of England, is historically recorded, and apparently not exaggerated in Scott's novels, "The Talisman," and "Ivanhoe."

During the reigns of the first Norman Kings of England, literature was only cultivated by "the clergy and the minstrels."¹ These classes, usually inspired by different motives, ideas, and thoughts, yet united during early English history in devoting all the literary influence of their period in favour of the Crusades.

To inspire admiration for this alleged holy warfare, religious fervour, music, and poetry were alike invoked. The clergy promised the blessing and approval of the Deity, the poets promised earthly fame, glory, and renown, as rewards of these desperate, yet heroic enterprises. The Pagan religion was extinct, the Jewish Deism survived, believed in, perhaps, by as many millions as ever, though scattered among different nations. They doubtless watched with feelings they dared not express the strange warfare chiefly caused by the influence of religious and poetical literature, waged in their ancestral land by Christians and Mohammedans, who knowing Jewish history alike condemned the execution of the Christian prophet.

¹ T. Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

During the Middle Ages, Rome and Constantinople, inheriting in different degrees the glory and intellect of a fallen Pagan empire, became the seats of the two chief religions in the world. The Papacy established at Rome directed for centuries not only Christian thought, but in great measure regulated its political policy. Though the Arabian city of Mecca was specially sacred in Mohammedan belief as the birth-place of the Prophet, yet Mohammed II., the captor of Constantinople, claimed, to some extent, the religious veneration as well as the political obedience of the Mohammedan majority in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Christianity and Mohammedanism, comprising between them all Europe, northern Africa, and western Asia, seemed at one time almost rivals in political power. But this competition gradually ceased. The latter declined steadily in political influence without any revival, while Christian nations increased rapidly in both martial and intellectual supremacy. The triumphant Christians, having completely supplanted Paganism and no longer dreading Mohammedanism as a political foe, began in a calmer spirit to study, translate, and appreciate the noble literature bequeathed by classic writers.

Apparently while recollection or dread of Pagan tyranny still remained such study was either neglected or distasteful, but when all danger of persecution disappeared, the splendid literature and even the singular religion of Greece and Rome were studied

by Christian readers with eager admiration and scholastic interest.

The divisions among Christians through the rise of Protestantism in western Europe favoured rather than hindered the study of classic authors. Opposing Christians, viewing each other with more hostility than ever, for the previous separation of the Greek Church from Rome caused far less strife,¹ were probably the more favourable to Pagan genius, which aroused neither prejudice nor apprehension. All fear of its religious revival vanished with its political power. Accordingly, classic poetry and philosophy, as well as history, became the established study of accomplished Christian youths throughout Europe.

All the vast Roman Empire, together with many lands never under its mighty sway, became either Christian or Mohammedan. Judaism and Parseeism, the two most ancient of all religions, were established in no country. Their subjected votaries could hardly obtain toleration under Christian or Mohammedan rule, the ancient faith of Buddhism remained throughout the middle and east of Asia, unexamined and stationary for ages, while ardent Christians and Mohammedans were making converts in all civilised parts of the known world. Yet while Christianity was at the height of political power and prosperity, having replaced Paganism, defeated or checked Mohammedanism, and politically triumphed over all opposing religions, the rise of Protestantism arrayed

¹ Dean Stanley's "Eastern Church."

Christians fiercely against each other throughout the most civilised countries of Europe.

About the time of this great event in Christian history, the discovery and conquest of America were solely effected by European Christians. Neither Asia nor Africa took part in these achievements, which were alike entirely due to European genius, learning, and enterprise. While, however, the new world presented a splendid scene of action and discovery to the energetic nations of Europe, it afforded little information to the antiquarian, historian, or theologian.

The subsequent discoveries and explorations in Australasia, South Africa, and other lands unknown to the Romans likewise added little to historical information. Naturalists, botanists, and travellers were indeed richly rewarded and gratified by the productions of these hitherto unknown countries. New birds, animals, plants, trees, vegetables and flowers, alike unknown to Aristotle, Pliny, and Columella, were brought to Europe in abundance from these newly-discovered regions. Yet for historical knowledge, and sacred tradition, the old civilised world, once almost comprised in the vast Roman Empire, remains unapproached either in historic interest or religious veneration.

CHAPTER II

EARLY BRITISH WRITINGS

THE dawn of literature among the first Christian nations decidedly favoured the glories of war rather than the blessings of peace. Historical students, moreover, must perceive that bigoted cruelty to enemies so prevalent during the Crusades, remained for many centuries firmly legalised throughout Great Britain and Christian Europe generally.

While Christian clergy preached a merciful faith, neither Christian kings, statesmen, nor even theologians, with few exceptions, acknowledged the duty of its practical adoption. The cruel enactments in Christian legislation, quite as much as the violence of kings, the vindictiveness of statesmen, or the ferocity of warriors, amply prove that merciful principles were denied in legal theory as well as in political acts.¹ Hence, historical personages are usually blamed by a comparatively humane posterity for deeds of cruelty, as if they alone were responsible for them. But it

¹ Hallam's "Constitutional History of England;" also Sir G. C. Lewis's "Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion."

will be often found that the most tyrannical kings or judges merely enforced the laws existing at their period with the consent, if not approval, of the community, and enacted by their predecessors.

In English history Shakespeare often illustrates this fact in the historical plays. If these dramatic chronicles, as Hallam calls them, are compared with his own histories, as well as with those of Hume, Lingard, and Macaulay, it will be seen how truly the poet describes many noble, historic personages committing or authorising legal cruelties, for which they cannot be considered personally responsible.

Among the first English authors who influenced public opinion were Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, Edmund Spenser, and Shakespeare. Of these the last has surpassed all cotemporaries in lasting esteem, value, and popularity. The previous writings and thoughts of Chaucer and Wickliffe, and the yet earlier works of the monk Cædmon and the venerable Bede, had comparatively slight influence in political history.¹

It appears from the admissions of learned English writers that from the earliest Christian monasteries in Ireland there came students of comparative learning.² Yet they, like the early British writers, apparently strove rather to maintain or restore classic literature than to examine or elucidate the historical legends of their own country.

¹ "Bede wrote all his extant works in Latin. The most notable is his 'Church History of the English Nation.'"—Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

² Hallam's "Literary History of Europe," Vol. 1st.

Doubtless the knowledge of Latin and of classic times formed a most useful bond of union among the Christian clergy, who, taking their orders and spiritual directions from Rome,¹ had no wish or motive to revive heathen legends or superstitions, but, on the contrary, rather desired to discourage curiosity or knowledge about them.²

The subsequent invention of printing, so wonderful in itself, and so full of great results, while it reproduced with impressive splendour the grand literature of Greece and Rome throughout England, did little to restore or elucidate the legendary histories or traditions of Great Britain and Ireland. They have always remained in comparative, almost hopeless, obscurity, save when occasionally referred to by writers of fiction.

The classic writings, like the Jewish Scriptures, were eagerly studied in their printed revivals by statesmen, philosophers, and theologians. Thus Bacon, Raleigh, Shakespeare, &c., often mention classic and Jewish writings, founding thereon most of their religious and political knowledge, while seldom

¹ "In 596 St. Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory the Great, brought the faith to the Anglo-Saxon tribes, and the moral ferment which the introduction of this new spiritual element occasioned induced also such intellectual exertion as the times permitted, and as the partial communication by the missionaries of the literature of the ancient world tended to enkindle and sustain."—Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

² "Every one that has perused the ancient monkish writers knows that they are full of allusions to the Latin poets."—Hume's "History of England," Vol. 3rd.

mentioning the ancient history of their own country, except in fanciful allusion.

The old English ballads mostly celebrating deeds of arms, and which Hallam thinks inferior to the Scottish,¹ were comparatively neglected till the 18th century when republished by Bishop Percy. Although admired by some literary men, Walter Scott especially, they were seldom referred to by former British writers.

The poet Chaucer (1328-1400), who, from social position, was, perhaps, one of the first literary men known at the English Court, lived in the troubled reign of the luckless Richard II. He was probably opposed to that king, being in high favour with John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, whose illustrious son, afterwards Henry IV., supplanted Richard on the throne. Yet Chaucer, though living in such an excited political period, seems not to have written about public affairs.² The time for literary influence in English politics was yet distant, and the poet's writings during a period of civil war seem to cautiously avoid political allusion.

His religious cotemporary, John Wickliffe (1324-1384), likewise, whose translation of the Bible was disapproved by the chief politicians, as well as theologians of his time,³ while preparing the English mind for future changes in Christian doctrine, had apparently no political influence.⁴

¹ "History of Literature," Vol. 2nd.

² T. Arnold's remarks on a list of Chaucer's works.—"Manual of English Literature."

³ Hallam's "Literary History," Vol. 1st. ⁴ Hume's "History."

Among the achievements of the first printer, Caxton, in Edward IV.'s reign, few, if any, works on religion were published,¹ though the previous efforts of Wickliffe, like Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales*, specially addressed Churchmen, then the chief if not the only patrons of learning in Great Britain and Ireland.

While among the early English kings, literary praises of chivalry evidently inspired Richard I. and others,² the first results of Caxton's work were made known to Edward IV. and his murderous brother, Richard III. During the latter's short, terrific reign there was indeed little time or inclination for literary study, though Richard favoured the cause of learning, which his troubled career and odious character prevented his doing much to promote. Shakespeare, no friend to Richard's memory, makes him reveal his knowledge of classic literature in soliloquy, mentioning the oratory of Nestor, the craft of Ulysses, the art of Sinon,³ &c.

It is remarkable that in literary allusions throughout Shakespeare's plays there is scarcely any reference to ancient English history. Nearly all literary allusion mentions Greek or Roman times and men as models and studies of Englishmen to the exclusion of remote English ancestry.

In the reign of Richard III.'s shrewd successor, Henry VII., literary influence made little progress in

¹ Hallam's "Literary History of Europe."

² Hume's "History of England."

³ See 3rd part of "Henry VI."

England,¹ but in the far more eventful reign of his son, Henry VIII., its influence, power, and progress were greater than ever in English history. The young king himself set an example of literary work, by writing an essay against the new Protestant doctrine, of which he was fated to become the political champion and supporter. The aid of literature was eagerly sought in England during this reign by advocates both of the old and new religious doctrines.

In Scotland, King James III., cotemporary of Henry VII., encouraged literature more than the latter did in England.² Classic works were occasionally cultivated in Scotland about this time by some of its nobility whom Scott's novels describe with admiration.³

But in England literary genius, effort, and progress were unprecedented in Henry VIII.'s time. Statesmen, theologians, nobles, poets, and philosophers alike displayed literary activity during his reign. The king,

¹ Green's "History of the English People," also Hallam's "Literary History."

² Cassell's "History of England."

³ Bishop Gawain Douglas, son of the Earl of Angus, translated Virgil, perhaps without his martial father's approval. Scott makes the old Earl exclaim, probably representing many of his class at the time—

"Thanks to Saint Bothan, son of mine
Save Gawain ne'er could pen a line,
So swore I, and I swear it still,
Let my boy Bishop fret his fill."

"Marmion," Canto VI.

representing, in his unrivalled self, the united Houses of York and Lancaster, was never disturbed by civil war. He surrounded himself, and was previously surrounded by the care of his wise father, with a succession of most able statesmen, ministers, and advisers.

Among these, Cardinal Wolsey was at first pre-eminent. Although an ambitious Churchman, desiring to obtain the Papacy, he was always a steady, liberal patron of literature. His ambitious energy was, however, constantly involved with the dangerous state intrigues of a troubled reign. While he generously promoted the progress of learning in England, he was always an active politician, as well as a most energetic man of business.¹ Yet his political fall, soon followed by his death, was unaccompanied by popular sympathy. The king's special favourite originally, he therefore had few or no friends according to the proverbial fate of favourites. He was envied by the nobility, and

¹ Green's "History of the English People," where the historian praises Wolsey's "enormous capacity for toil." Shakespeare's description of him in "Henry VIII." seems also confirmed by different historians. See Lingard's and Hume's Histories; also Froude's "Reign of Henry VIII."

"He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one. . . .
Ever witness for him.
Those twins of learning, Ipswich and Oxford!
One of which fell with him,
Unwilling to outlive the good that rear'd it.
The other, though unfinished, yet so famous,
So excellent in art, and still so rising,
That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue."

apparently not beloved by either the clergy or people generally.

It was long after his time, when suspicious politicians or jealous ecclesiastics had ceased to fear or envy him, that his extraordinary merits were fully revealed to his fellow-countrymen.

Throughout Henry VIII.'s agitated, dangerous reign the great talents and efforts of many English literary men were ignored, opposed, or suppressed by political intrigue and regal despotism, perhaps even more than by popular ignorance or prejudice.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE OF TUDOR

ALTHOUGH when the Act of Magna Charta was wrung from King John by an indignant nobility all regal tyranny was thought to be either prevented or considerably checked, yet Henry VIII.'s conduct was often as arbitrary as that of any previous English sovereign. Evidently, however, this monarch, possessing a shrewdness, if not self-control, rarely combined with violent passions, always contrived to tyrannise over those in his power, and to prudently avoid all collision with others who might have defied it.

He was far more implacable towards the nobility and statesmen, among whom, however, were some of the most learned men of the time, than he dared to be towards the lower classes. Hence his comparative popularity among the latter, despite conduct usually found incompatible with that coveted gift.

¹ See Macaulay's remarks on Henry's tyranny towards the nobility, and his submission or adhesion to the popular will.—"History of England," Vol. 1st, Ch. I.

It was England's fate to see some of her most learned men either executed, imprisoned, disgraced, or influenced by this fierce and practically most successful despot.

Unlike the nervous King John, or the desperate Richard III., Henry, while committing perhaps as many deliberate cruelties as either of them, by shrewdly following the spirit of his times, contrived to preserve popularity to the end of his terrible reign. Yet under his rule, two executed and two divorced queens, the executions of Lady Salisbury, Buckingham, and others, the premature death of Wolsey, broken-hearted by the king's harshness, and the execution of Sir Thomas More, alike prove Henry's implacable temper and almost absolute power.

Sir T. More, Wolsey's successor in the Chancellorship, showed, even in youth, a great taste for literature. This inclination was remarked by the celebrated writer Erasmus, who, fortunately for the learned world, was no subject of Henry VIII. Both he and Luther about this time engaged the earnest attention of most thoughtful minds in western Europe by their theological views. Although each favoured the Reformation, they differed seriously from one another.¹

More was a sincere Catholic, and his opinions were for some time shared by his royal master. But on Henry's conversion or inclination to Protestantism,

¹ Hallam's "Literary History," Vol. 1st.

More refused to own the king's religious supremacy as head of the English Church, and his refusal being thought equivalent to treason, he was executed.¹ In his fanciful book, "The Utopia," this luckless statesman apparently sought relief from the troubles of public life in a world of imagination. Nothing in it denoted revolutionary intentions. None of his works were very popular, or much known in England, being only appreciated by a few learned men. The irritated king therefore decided on More's execution, without incurring popular anger, while gratifying his temper and vindicating his new assumptions.

During Henry's reign theological works producing and caused by religious differences chiefly occupied the British literary mind. They seemed for a time to almost replace those industrious translations and studies of classic works to which British literary thought had hitherto been chiefly devoted. In fact, theological disputes, intrigues, and interests were at their height during Henry VIII.'s reign. Cardinals, bishops, and learned reformers argued, preached, studied, and wrote, while the king, with mingled sagacity, intense selfish pride, and political prudence, never so united before in an English sovereign, really triumphed over all parties in turn. He evidently watched, or was well apprised of, the changes in English opinion with a rare, observant accuracy. He died almost, if not quite, as popular as he lived, after a career of tyrannical cruelty unsurpassed in

¹ Hume's "History."

English history, without being endangered by revolution, or even attempted assassination.¹

The religious faith of England was now, for the first time in Christian history, in process of change. This change, however, was only that of Christian divisions. It left the chief doctrines of the faith and its political history unaltered. No new revelation, no discovery or intelligence derived from Syria, the seat of the Gospel history, aided the disputants. The construction put on Christianity by the Popes and the Reformers, the charges of superstition against the former and of heresy against the latter, chiefly engaged the thoughts, arguments, and attention of western Europe. The effect of this religious contest upon the English intellect was most important, engrossing, and permanent.

No previous English king was ever involved in the religious disputes of his subjects like Henry VIII. At this momentous period of English thought it was fated that the king who nominally ruled and legally checked or encouraged it should be a man of implacable temper, violent passions, yet great shrewdness.² He really followed or accompanied the changing opinions of England while seeming to guide and direct them. The influence of opposing theologians in this reign almost eclipsed that of other literary men. At its beginning Cardinal Wolsey was pre-eminent, and at its close the Protestant Archbishop

¹ Hume's "History." Also Macaulay's remarks on Henry VIII.'s successful home policy.—"History of England," Vol. 1st.

² Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. 1st.

Cranmer had more influence probably than any one else.

The intense interest caused by the religious dissensions, the extraordinary fact of Henry's advocating opposing parties in turn, the mingling of religious motives or interests with political ones by Wolsey, More, and Cranmer, absorbed the attention while dividing the opinions of most thoughtful English minds. The popular tyrant, with as much political skill as Machiavelli himself could have taught, evidently understood his English subjects with wonderful accuracy.¹

He played, as it were, with the learned, earnest, and religious enthusiasm raging around him, using it for his own purposes without either sharing its fervour or appreciating its true spirit. He became, in Macaulay's words, "the Pope of England." He obtained the thanks, blessings, and admiring obedience of each party in turn, while gratifying both his vindictive and sensual feelings with a success unequalled at least in English history. His favour to Cranmer and the thorough confidence he finally placed in him apparently made his last days and memory all the more popular among his subjects.²

¹ Shakespeare makes Richard III. (in "Henry VI.") name this Italian, yet he was slain about fifteen years after Machiavelli's birth. But Henry VIII. had probably read his advice to rulers in "The Prince." If so, he certainly profited by its instruction in the art of cajoling, yet oppressing subjects, in which unscrupulous policy no other English king was as successful.

² See Macaulay's opinion on Cranmer's complete acknowledgment

Henry personally represented their changing opinions, views, and ideas. He also identified himself with many popular notions of what a king should be. He was liberal, generous, frank, and familiar in manner, fond of display, delighting in gorgeous entertainments and splendour of every kind. "There never was a prince came off better after interviews," wrote his biographer, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and with probable truth. He personally pleased nearly every one who sought him. All his acts of tyranny were usually attributed to evil advisers, while the crafty tyrant ruled almost absolutely over a high-spirited nation, increasing rapidly in all kinds of knowledge, yet allowing some of its best men to be sacrificed at his capricious will.

Many of his victims, including his unfortunate queens, either from fear or a lingering hope of softening his heart, died praising him to the last.¹ No indignant, outraged relative eager for an almost just revenge, no public or private remonstrance, no popular disgust or resentment checked or restrained him in his conduct to those in his power. No such interference ever interposed between his will and his actions.² Henry VIII., in fact, controlled English minds and bodies alike.

With all the tyranny of a prince in the Middle of Henry's ecclesiastical and political supremacy.—"History of England," Vol. 1st.

¹ Hume's "History."

² Froude's "Reign of Henry VIII.," also Brewer's "English Studies," Hume's "History," and Macaulay's, Vol. 1st.

Ages, or even in times more remote, he, nevertheless, kept accurate pace with the advancing knowledge, increasing intelligence, and new ideas of his agitated yet obedient subjects. His accomplished mind, winning manners, and lavish generosity were proclaimed to the majority of them by loyal report or outward display, while on the minority, including, unfortunately, some of the best, wisest, and most intellectual, fell the fury of that savage temper, thus proving how much real tyranny may be indulged in with safety, and even popularity, when accompanied by a shrewd judgment and accurate knowledge of human nature.

Shakespeare's play of "Henry VIII." prudently gives only the first part of his reign. In every scene the best and most attractive qualities of the chief characters are displayed and their evil ones withheld. Thus Henry and his first victim, Buckingham, are admired and pitied, Wolsey is drawn with such skill that, while his ambition at first seems culpable, yet his noble resignation under disgrace and his great services to learning command the reader's final admiration. The queens, Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, are described as if by admirers of each. The pious dignity of the former and the amiable, bright promise of the latter interest readers without arousing partisanship for or against either of these royal rivals, between whom probably there was no love lost. But the sketch of Henry is a masterpiece of literary skill, historic truth, and political caution. The "best side" of his character is alone presented truthful and exact, according to history, but omitting all mention of those

terrible passions which so effectually perverted the better qualities of this extraordinary sovereign.

In the following reigns of Edward VI. and his half-sister, Mary Tudor, English literature was scant and obscure. Edward was a Protestant of literary taste and acquirement, but died young. During his brief reign Protestantism, finally established by Henry VIII., still prevailed, Cranmer supporting it with all his learning, ability, and influence.

At Edward's death the Protestant Lady Jane Grey was dethroned and executed, while the Catholic Princess Mary, daughter of the divorced Queen Catherine, who had legal right to the Crown, succeeded to its peaceful possession. Lady Jane, taught by the learned Roger Ascham, was an interesting, even romantic, instance of the literary taste and capacity of her time.¹ Her studies were chiefly on classic authors; she had no political ambition, yet her sad fate was more deplored by a civilised posterity than at a time when religious strife, in which she was involuntarily concerned, extinguished nearly all feelings of mercy or justice. Her tutor, Ascham, a Protestant, had instructed both Edward and his half-sister, the Princess Elizabeth.

The new queen had also some literary culture, though probably derived from other sources, and she immediately became the royal champion and political restorer of the fallen, superseded Church. Doubtless, remembering the harsh treatment of her noble mother,

¹ Green's "History of the English People," Vol. 2nd.

and abhorring all Protestantism, Mary and her advisers viewed its supporters, Cranmer especially, with dread and suspicion.

The extraordinary, almost incredible aversion with which even educated fellow-Christians viewed each other's doctrines, is one of the saddest and most dangerous facts of English history at this period and long afterwards. The energies and thoughts of most literary men were devoted to religious controversy. Christianity in Britain was now, as it were, plunged into civil war. Fellow-countrymen and fellow-Christians abhorred, persecuted, and reviled each other with a fanatical violence previously unknown in British history.

The literary knowledge and education of the time, instead of checking religious bigotry, were usually enlisted in its favour. The comparatively well educated, both lay and clerical, encouraged and, to some extent, justified by conscientious motives the most unscrupulous conduct towards religious opponents. The energy of religious fanaticism, formerly devoted to war with Mohammedans or persecution of Jews, was now directed by fellow-Christians against each other. Their common Christianity suggested no conciliation, showed no softening influence, no means of mediation whatever during years of religious enmity.

Former civil or foreign wars and rebellions were, except the Crusades, entirely political. Although they were usually disgraced by wanton cruelty to prisoners, yet such cruelty was less, both in ex-

tent and malignity, than what was sanctioned by religious intolerance during the first contests between Catholicism and Protestantism. The disregard for Papal authority finally shown by Henry VIII., and the persecutions legalised at the end of his reign against Catholics, were maintained during Edward VI.'s short reign. The involuntary accession to power of Lady Jane Grey, whose supporters probably contemplated continued persecution of the old faith, was for a time injurious to Protestantism.

In Queen Mary, Catholicism and legitimate royal rights were united. Many loyal Protestants, while regretting her religion, submitted to her rule without a thought of rebellion. Her accession was soon accompanied by a desperate, even ferocious, effort to restore Catholicism by active persecution of the new doctrines. The religious persecutions in her terrible reign prevented or discouraged much effort of literary genius. Religious contest absorbed public attention exclusively, while the queen's marriage to an unpopular Spanish prince, who hated England, alienated the English nation still more from the old religion, which Mary made frantic efforts to restore in its former supremacy. The public execution of Cranmer, her father's trusted and revered adviser, was perhaps the most terrible of all the atrocities in Mary's reign. Yet it apparently aroused no literary effort of the friends or foes of the unfortunate prelate, though an event so public, so dreadful, and so interesting might have naturally roused all powers of mental

thought in its condemnation or defence. Evidently very slight literary influence existed, and what did exist was chiefly controlled by religious and political interests.

At this period of British history, even educated Catholics and Protestants alike sanctioned the execution of persons for alleged witchcraft.¹ The difference between the treatment of supposed witches by the educated and by the ignorant classes at this time requires attention. Belief in their malignant powers often actuated both. While the latter, through fear, paid and usually spared them, the former legalised and inflicted death upon them. Thus educational superiority practically hardened their hearts without really enlightening their minds. The ignorant, through superstitious terror, seldom injured them, while their worst enemies were among those very persons whose partial enlightenment only made them more implacable by allying equally superstitious hatred with legal power.²

The differences in Christian doctrine were now, for the first time in Britain, supposed to entail the future perdition hitherto reserved for non-Christians. As in alleged witchcraft, the British intellect, as a rule, inflamed and embittered, instead of enlightening or calming the roused passions of the ignorant. Literary influence for a long time in Britain, seldom advocated,

¹ Macaulay's "History," Lecky's "Rationalism," and Green's "History of the English People."

² Lecky's "Rationalism" and Scott's remarks in the "Bride of Lammermoor."

suggested, or justified forbearance among religious or political disputants. On the contrary, it usually increased the general irritation between fellow-Christians and fellow-subjects by fervent preaching and writing or by legal enactment.¹

During Mary's reign, despite all her efforts, British literary influence decidedly favoured Protestantism. The haughty, cruel King consort, Philip of Spain, to whom Mary was quite devoted, had probably some share in irritating Protestant subjects against their religion. The isolated royal pair were induced, if not forced, by their increasing unpopularity to ally themselves all the more with Spain, which, like France, opposed Protestantism, both monarchies associating it with political as well as religious revolution.

Unlike Britain, and northern Europe, the French, Italian, and Spanish intellect generally supported Catholicism, believing Protestantism a combination of religious heresy and political rebellion. In this view Philip and Mary fully shared, the former regarding English Protestants with the mingled national and religious enmity of a Catholic Spaniard, the latter with a personal feeling of animosity.² For in them she recognised the enemies of her unfortunate mother, Queen Catherine, as well as those of her husband and

¹ Hume's and Macaulay's histories, also Lecky's remarks on the general disapproval among even learned Catholics and Protestants of forbearance towards each other.—"History of Rationalism."

² Lingard's "History of England," also Tennyson's poem of "Queen Mary."

the Catholic minority, whom she alone trusted among her subjects.

Her half-sister and successor Elizabeth was now the hope of the future among English Protestants. Philip soon went to Spain, leaving his luckless queen alone in England, still striving by relentless persecution of Protestants to re-establish Catholicism in its former authority. So great, however, was English loyalty, at this time, to legitimate sovereign right, that this bigoted, zealous princess, cruelly persecuted the religion of the majority of her subjects without either incurring rebellion or attempt at assassination.

Queen Mary ended a disappointed life in political peace, though amid the unconcealed joy of most of her subjects, who, with eager exultation, acknowledged Queen Elizabeth, hitherto a suspected prisoner, as their welcome and almost absolute sovereign.

CHAPTER IV

THE ELIZABETHAN ERA

WITH Elizabeth's accession disappeared all Spanish courtiers, influence, and political connection. England evidently found her true representative in the new queen. Her position, views, and policy were so thoroughly national and popular that the expressive appellation of England's Elizabeth was bestowed upon her, while recollections of Philip and Mary associated their religion with Spain and Spaniards in many English minds.¹

In a literary sense Wickliffe's opinions, which, though politically suppressed, had left their traces on the English intellect, probably prepared the way for Protestantism in England, but till Elizabeth's reign it was never very firmly established, though at the close of her father's life it seemed the prevailing influence. Though Henry VIII. had quarrelled with the Papacy, his rapid change from ardent Catholicism to a very worldly Protestantism, together with the opposing

¹ Macaulay's and Hume's Histories, also Tennyson's "Queen Mary."

influences of his different ministers or advisers, Wolsey, More, Thomas Cromwell, and Cranmer, prevented the sure triumph of Protestantism, even when it seemed politically supreme.¹

But Elizabeth, at her accession, was viewed as the young heroine of England. Her immediate popularity equalled that of her father. She was her nation's religious as well as political champion and representative. No previous English queen ever occupied the same position in the sight of her subjects. The beautiful, prophetic language Shakespeare attributes to Cranmer about her future reign, though perhaps rather exaggerated or fantastic for modern taste, apparently expressed truly enough the real feelings of her Protestant subjects during her long important reign.²

All the mental and physical resources of England were at her immediate command. The bravery of

¹ See Macaulay on Henry's political and religious position.—
"History of England," Vol. 2nd.

² "This royal infant (Heaven still move about her),
Though in her cradle, yet now promises
Upon this land a thousand, thousand blessings,
Which time shall bring to ripeness.
She shall be,
(But few now living can behold that goodness),
A pattern to all princes living with her,
And all that shall succeed.
She shall be to the happiness of England
An aged princess, many days shall see her,
And yet no day without a deed to crown it."

"Henry VIII.," Act. V.

youth, the counsel of age, the wealth of the nobility, the loyalty of the commons, the fervent attachment of the clergy, the wisdom of philosophers and the genius of poets alike supported, glorified, and adorned her long tenure of supreme power. With her was now identified the national independence of all foreign influence by the severance of the last link, hitherto uniting western Europe in one form of Christianity, for previously Henry VIII.'s religion was too uncertain, and Edward VI.'s reign too short for thorough confidence in Protestant ascendancy.

Elizabeth, with far more consistency, was head of the Church as well as the State. She represented the English intellect with royal rights, and theological assumptions united in a resolute, sagacious, and popular queen. Yet, despite her power, august position, and vast dominion, there remained, among the English Catholic minority, a rather large proportion of intellect, wealth, and education. To these outnumbered and distrusted subjects the failure of Protestantism in southern Europe was the grand consolation for its triumph in the north.

The determined resistance of Ireland to Protestantism afforded as yet little relief to English Catholics. That unfortunate island, hitherto always England's political foe, friendly to her enemies and hostile to her allies, could not be thought a sure friend to English Catholics, whose ancestry were identified with those of Protestant fellow-countrymen in Ireland's historical conquest.

Elizabeth's greatest foe, alike to her glory, safety,

and historic reputation, appeared in the attractive, romantic form of her cousin, the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. This princess, as if fated to irritate and perplex Elizabeth in personal as well as political rivalry, possessed to an extraordinary degree that personal beauty and charm of manner which none of Elizabeth's flatterers or admirers, however enthusiastic, could truly attribute to their patronising mistress.

In Mary of Scotland the future hopes of all British Roman Catholics became centred; she was to them almost as much the political heroine of Catholicism as Elizabeth was of Protestantism. During their lives the religious minds of Britain, unequally divided between the old faith and differing forms of the new, considered them opposing champions of the contending Christian divisions. Scotland, like England at this time, experienced all the perilous excitement of doctrinal conflict.

Like England also, the power of literature, though in a less degree, was chiefly directed in favour of Protestantism.¹ The earnest preaching and writing of John Knox and George Buchanan were scarcely answered by Scottish Roman Catholics. Their faith in Scotland made far less resistance than in England,

¹ The comparative slow growth, or late influence of Scottish literature is thus noticed by Mr. Buckle: "To the beginning of the eighteenth century, Scotland could only boast of two authors, Buchanan and Napier, whose works have benefited mankind." He adds that till the beginning of the 19th century Scottish literature was extremely backward.—"History of Civilisation," Vol. 3rd.

where many more Catholic families remained in suspected seclusion on their estates, deriving sympathy from Continental co-religionists, who, triumphant in France, Spain, and Italy, still contemplated the return of Britain to the Catholic Church.

It apparently never occurred to literary or thoughtful men at home or abroad to effect any religious reconciliation. Political supremacy, aiming to enforce Christian uniformity, was as much the prevailing desire of the educated as of the ignorant classes throughout western Europe.¹ This object was revealed by the Reformers in fervent English or German, while the utter condemnation of the least difference from Catholic doctrine reappeared in the solemn Latin decrees of Rome, wholly uninfluenced by the progress or changes of time.

The British intellect, founding its literary knowledge on the Greek and Roman classics and its religion on Jewish history, now expressed more fully than ever its religious thoughts in the English language. Yet among all Christian divisions the monarchical system of government found exclusive favour and support. Obedience and devotion to kings or chiefs, their heroism, generosity, exploits, and popularity, were the favourite subjects of traditions, songs, and ballads, throughout Britain from the earliest times.

These sentiments were gradually developed by advancing civilisation into a practical, steady, though

¹ Hallam's "Literary History," also Guizot's "Civilisation in Europe."

limited, obedience to a successive line of monarchs both in England and Scotland. During the reigns of Henry VIII. and of Elizabeth, English attachment to monarchy, no longer claimed by rival disputants, was at its height. It often amounted in the conduct of statesmen, the language of politicians, the teaching of clergy, and the praises of poets, almost to adoration, while Republican ideas were either unknown or so unpopular as not to be mentioned.

In Scotland, divided between Highlanders and Lowlanders, the former, though devotedly loyal to different chiefs, yet united with the more civilised Lowlanders in obeying an hereditary king, whose supremacy the proudest Highland chiefs always acknowledged.

Ireland showed a marked difference in this, as in other respects, to the sister kingdoms. While the Protestant Elizabeth Tudor, and the Catholic Mary Stuart, reigned in England and Scotland, when the Christian divisions in Britain were in fierce contention, Ireland adhered to the old faith without as yet showing much sympathy for British Catholics.

The final defeat of Catholicism throughout Britain made it apparently all the more popular, beloved, and revered in Ireland. All traces of Irish heathenism, for centuries lingering in vague tradition, now lost all remaining interest for Irish minds. Rome, the supreme religious successor to a vanished political empire, which it surpassed yet rather resembled, in its civilising influence over European minds, was now

superseded in Britain by a Christian revolt.¹ This doctrinal revolution was finally successful owing to the zeal, energy, conviction, and talent of the British majority.

But in Ireland the imaginative power of Catholicism, its fervent appeals through bodily as well as mental senses, to the devotion of a peculiarly impulsive people, secured a permanent, moral ascendancy.² Yet British power, conviction, and enterprise established Protestantism throughout remote colonies, conquests, and dependencies wherever the British name was known. The cause, vindication, and principles of Protestantism were expounded and maintained with all the force, energy, and conviction of the British intellect. Its triumph almost raised the political power of its royal representative, Elizabeth, into a despotism, while its increasing influence finally dethroned and indirectly caused the execution of its royal opponent, Mary of Scotland.

In Ireland its political triumph gave it no attraction whatever.³ While brave, eager British colonists exultingly proclaimed it throughout the politically conquered island, its native population, identifying its cause with British invasion, enthusiastically preserved

¹ Dean Milman's comparison between the political Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church, also Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. 1st.

² Macaulay's Essay on "Ranke's History of the Popes."

³ "In Ireland the old faith marked the division between two races; it was the symbol of the national spirit."—Lecky's "Rationalism," Vol. 2nd.

the old faith, whose defeat and misfortunes throughout Britain endowed it with an interest and a sympathetic reverence never before equalled in Ireland during its political supremacy.

In Elizabeth's reign literary genius, enterprise, and effort attained a height before unknown in England. Although in previous reigns some influence had accompanied the religious views of Wickliffe, the poetry of Chaucer, and of a few other writers, still more remote, yet their diffusion, owing to the general ignorance, was only possible among a few comparatively learned minds. Judging from the conduct of kings, from legal enactments, and even from manifestations of public feeling, there was apparently very slight literary progress or improvement during many previous centuries of English history.¹

But Elizabeth's reign "stood alone in the literary history of the world."² Among those whose great works, or their results, produced most effect on British thought—Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Lord Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Richard Hooker are the most remarkable, even in the estimation of the present age. Bacon (1561–1626), in his profound essays, was apparently thought by some to rather resemble, or imitate Montaigne's *Fables*.³ Yet this French writer's essays, an amusing mixture of wit and trifling playfulness and shrewdness, are very different from

¹ Macaulay on this subject, "History of England," Vol. 1st; also Buckle's "Civilisation."

² Shaw's "Manual of English Literature."

³ Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

the grave, learned works of Bacon, who was essentially English in thought, style, and peculiar genius.¹

His sound common sense, classic learning, and deep insight into human nature, partly derived from personal experience of the English Court and political life, eminently fitted him to instruct others. Yet he lived and wrote intellectually before his time, as he foresaw, when, by his will, he transmitted his fame's recognition to the "next age." This celebrated testamentary insertion by such a man shows that literary appreciation could not be fairly expected during a reign so troubled by religious and political dissensions as that of Elizabeth, despite her personal popularity. Her reign was a time of production and original thought rather than of critical examination or appreciative study.

But most literary Englishmen, as well as those engaged in active life, vied with each other in practical devotion to her rule. This princess, violent yet sagacious, like her father, shrewd, observant, with great powers of self-control, yet vain, jealous, and often tyrannical, ruled and nominally patronised a new world of original thought, enterprise, and accomplishment, in a nation of admiring, obedient subjects.² She was, herself, the incarnation of royal popularity. She united all the historic, traditional glories of a long line of regal ancestry with the increasing enlighten-

¹ Spedding's "Life of Bacon," also Macaulay's Essay on him.

² Macaulay's remarks on Elizabeth's character and conduct.—
"History of England," Vol. 1st.

ment of her period, and its confident promise of a yet more brilliant future.

Bacon, a courtier, as well as philosopher, in his essays and "Reign of Henry VII.," always praises monarchy. Hitherto, English literary men had little influence in their country's government, but from Elizabeth's reign inclusive politics and literature became more connected.¹ Bacon, Raleigh, Spenser, and Sydney were all either courtiers, ministers, or men associating with leading English statesmen. None were retired students, and, in different ways, all took active part in social or political life.

Even Shakespeare, of whom much less is known, was constantly in London, though probably not much in political society. Bacon, in frequent allusion to classic writers as well as in cautious avoidance of religious controversy so prevalent in his time, resembles Shakespeare, on this exciting subject. Both these great Englishmen wrote for all religious divisions of their fellow-countrymen, and therefore attack neither "popery" nor "heresy." These insulting or reproachful terms were then and ever since angrily exchanged between opposing sections of Christian Englishmen.

Like Shakespeare, Bacon had higher objects in view than to increase or maintain the prejudices of fellow-Christians against each other. In his essays, Bacon enters into details of town and country life, his

¹ "In no country have literary men been so little connected [as in England] with the Government, or so little rewarded by it."—Buckle's "Civilisation," Vol. 1st, Ch. V.

chief literary object being to effect profitable results from a philosophy founded on practical experiment. He appealed in wonderfully condensed language to the common sense of all intelligent Englishmen.¹

In his admirable essay on "Studies" he declares that "Reading maketh a full man, Writing an exact man, and Conference a ready man." The confident accuracy with which this valuable opinion is given shows, among other proofs, that this wise man derived much of his vast human knowledge from the influential and illustrious circle of acquaintances at the English Court, with whom he mingled. Their characters he studied with a calm penetration, rarely preserved by a man amid the engrossing, exciting, often irritating influences of political rivalry, personal jealousy, and State intrigue.

Yet all the calmness, cool judgment, and passionless examination of human nature usually found in or attributed to persons, free from worldly excitement, are displayed to an almost unequalled extent in the writings of this thoughtful statesman.

Whether in public or private life, he evidently studied human nature for its benefit, though more for the interests of posterity than for men of his own time. He was, indeed, thought by many contemporaries, a selfish, grave, if not morose, philosopher, who, making few friends, retired in political disgrace, into private life. It required, as he foresaw, a future and more learned age to appreciate his vast services

¹ Macaulay's Essay on Bacon, also T. Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

to the human mind, generally, and especially to that of England.

His eminent cotemporary, Edmund Spenser (1553–1598), at once a poet and politician, with somewhat of the ardour of a theologian, wrote only one important prose work, a "View of Ireland." In this work he expresses an enmity to the Irish rather like that of the previous Welsh writer, Giraldus Cambrensis, but with the fervent addition of new religious to old national hostility. Yet this remarkable treatise had probably far more political influence over British minds than was ever contemplated in his former celebrated poem, "The Faërie Queen." The latter was only suited to an educated minority, and was loyally presented to Queen Elizabeth.¹

Spenser's work on Ireland was doubtless read by many Englishmen who took interest in it, resided there, or took part in its conquest or colonisation. It was one of the most important, early political works, though not actual history, written by an Englishman about Ireland.

Spenser, being a travelling observer and a resident in Ireland, besides one of the most cultivated and admired Englishmen of his time, his work indicated both present and future English policy towards that island. Yet, despite his talents and refinement, his works display a sectarian bitterness never shown by Bacon or Shakespeare. He seemed fully imbued with the religious and political prejudices of his time, which were, especially in Ireland, intimately connected.

¹ Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

He mentions "Popery" the faith of his ancestors, and of the Irish majority, more as if it were a relic of ancient barbarism than as the chief link between the native Irish and all European civilisation, which, at his time, it certainly was. For, though Protestantism was generally advocated by the intellect of northern Europe, yet Catholicism was steadily maintained by those nations inheriting the artistic genius of ancient Rome. This majestic city, once supreme over all civilised parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, had long exchanged the political for the spiritual dominion of the educated world.¹

¹ Milman's "History of Christianity," also Farrar's "Life of Christ."

CHAPTER V

SPENSER AND RALEIGH

ROME, in mingled ancient and mediæval grandeur, knowledge, tradition, and spiritual ascendancy, before the Reformation, possessed nearly every element of intellectual attraction. Between this august city and the isolated native Irish there existed an alliance theological and political which history has proved to be permanent. Spenser, the observant, gifted English poet, indignantly perceived the resolute enmity of the Irish towards both his nation and its new form of Christianity. This hostility was the hereditary national quarrel of centuries, blended with new antipathy to Protestantism, which, in a union of sentiment, caused implacable animosity between English and Irish at this time. Most descendants of Spenser's fellow-countrymen who had settled in Ireland became Protestant. They naturally shared, approved, and supported the religious as well as the political views of their fellow-Englishmen.

The effect of a new religious enmity between descendants of political, national, yet fellow-Catholic

opponents, was both to strengthen Irish Catholicism and arouse Irish Protestant zeal against it, as being a political as well as a religious foe. Spenser, like many educated men of his time, allowed religious prejudice, when allied with political interest, to overcome that love of justice and mercy often accompanying a mind so gifted, and talents so eminent, as his. Intellectual superiority had little effect in making him just, humane, or even judicious, in political views. He found the English name hated in Ireland, English colonists attacked and slain, and English rule evaded or resisted. He, accordingly, in the spirit of an eager partisan, devoted his powerful descriptive pen against the native Irish, with as much zeal as, had he been a soldier, he would probably have used his sword.

The English reading minority, believing in Spenser's opinion of the Irish, was as bitterly hostile to them as the most ignorant English soldier. It is, indeed, probable that there was much truth in Spenser's account of the Irish. But, like most warm partisans, he entirely ignores the ill-treatment they received. He says nothing about their wrongs, nothing of any redeeming qualities in them. Their cruelty and ignorance are described, perhaps truly enough, but when nothing is said about cruelty to them, only half the historic picture is shown, and so the English mind was only partially enlightened by this accomplished writer.

Spenser has no fellow feeling even for Irish poets and bards, though he cannot deny their genius.¹ For

¹ Macaulay states that the "judging eye of Spenser" per-

he saw in them a class who, by the inspiration of poetry, addressed to an impressionable people, preserved the national hatred to England.

Without considering the reasons which may have alienated many Irish minds from England, this intellectual poet, like his brilliant successor, Milton, many years later, saw nothing excusable or redeeming in "notable traitors," forgetting that some of his illustrious fellow-Englishmen had suffered death under the same fatal yet rather capricious designation. Of all terms of dangerous meaning that of traitor is perhaps the most remarkable even in Christian history. It was often applied with equal condemnation by political opponents to each other, while its legal penalty seems hardly reconcilable with Christian doctrine.

Spenser, with many details of the terrible wars of the Roses, and the more recent cruelties of Henry VIII. and Mary Tudor, in his mind, naturally associated treason with its inexorable penalty of death. He had known some noble Englishmen executed for alleged treason alone, without the least sympathy, among a vast Christian community, except from partisans. Virtue, talent, purity of thought, or motive, seldom, if ever, availed the condemned victims of political and, latterly, of religious persecution.

Accustomed to such a moral sacrifice of Christian mercy and generosity to the brief, worldly, triumph of political faction or religious opinion, Spenser saw received among the Irish "the pure gold of poetry."—"History of England," Vol. 1st.

nothing to arouse compassion or sympathy for the Irish enemies of England. Among them the bards and the clergy still retained influence, over a subjected population, long after native kings or chiefs had yielded to British rule. These classes, formerly rather opposed, owing to the lingering fancy of the bards for heathen traditions, now united in opposing England, whose former political invasion and recent Protestantism alike alienated national poets and Catholic priests.

Spenser, therefore, saw that both clergy and bards were the chief foes to England, now obeying the almost despotic rule of Elizabeth. He apparently desired, if he did not quite suggest, the same exterminating policy towards the Irish which, many years later, Oliver Cromwell tried to enforce. In this design, Spenser shared the views of many, perhaps most, English colonists of the time.

It was in reality the practical adoption of the Irish example. Many English colonists and Irishmen came practically to the same conclusion, that they could not co-exist in Ireland. Hence each party not only desired, but attempted, the extirpation or banishment of the other, during a political history disgraceful to their common Christianity.¹ In fact, the idea of extermination, so opposed alike to Christian precept and even to modern European policy, has often been pleasing rather than revolting to some among both sections of Ireland's divided population.

¹ Macaulay on Irish History—"History of England," Vol. 1st; also Lecky's "England in the 18th Century."

The effect of Spenser's Irish views was, of course, to increase, and as far as talent could, to justify English hatred to Ireland. Indeed, the poetic sweetness of the author of the "Faërie Queen," like the subsequent sublimity of the author of "Paradise Lost," yielded altogether to the irritating influence of what is still called the Irish problem. Historical students will find in the views of both these immortal poets about Ireland as much bitterness, sometimes nearly as coarsely expressed, as could be expected from ignorant or excited soldiery.

Yet neither of these great men wrote much that was altogether false. There was great truth in their descriptions of the implacable hatred of the Irish to the English, but, like most writers on Ireland, they, perhaps unconsciously, treated its history, like a lawsuit in which they were advocates retained for English interests, and the English public both judge and jury.

When historical narrative is thus degraded into special pleading and addressed to a reading public, more inclined to believe than to examine, to trust rather than to correct, or even perceive unsuspected injustice, the moral result is mere confirmation of previous prejudices. These prejudices may, indeed, be often mingled with truth, but yet are neither ruled by its restraints nor enlightened by its influence. Thus all Spenser's knowledge of Ireland, his admiration for its scenery and natural advantages, were quite overruled by his anxiety to see it under English Protestant dominion.

On the other hand, the Irish Catholics whenever they could express their thoughts, chiefly through religious channels on the Continent, described English invaders as relentless tyrants and themselves as injured innocents ; an island of saints, who, but for English conquest, would have been a pattern of every virtue to the Christian world.¹ When, therefore, the expressions of able, accomplished men, Catholic and Protestant, about Ireland, constantly sacrifice the permanent value of historic truth to the temporary cause of religious and political supremacy, its perplexing history and condition, even to this day, are to some extent explained.

Literature, on the whole, has, hitherto, done little practical service to Ireland. During centuries the prejudices of Edmund Spenser, confirmed by Milton, represented English ideas, while the political and religious bigotry of the Irish have equally obscured, through one-sided historic versions, all their own sins, in the real facts, so humiliating to both parties, of Irish history.

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), like Spenser, visited and resided in Ireland. Like him also, he was a poet, but possessed more variety of talent. He was at once a courtier, soldier, sailor, and, for his times, a highly educated classical scholar. He was thus a wonderful combination of capacities, tastes, and acquirements rarely united.² Yet, unlike Spenser, this

¹ Thomas Moore's "History of Ireland," and Macaulay's remarks on the same subject.—"History of England," Vol. 1st.

² "Raleigh, the soldier, the sailor, the scholar, the courtier, the

remarkable man did not much influence the public through the medium of literature. He was said to be the first, or among the first, who introduced potatoes and tobacco, those treasures of modern Irish life, into Ireland, and was thoroughly English in his views, principles, and wishes.

He was, moreover, during Elizabeth's reign, one of the most attractive, fashionable men, even at her brilliant Court. With the learning of a profound scholar, he combined, not only the bravery, enterprise, and hardihood of both military and naval life, but the wit, polish, and gaiety of a man of fashion. He was the splendidly dressed model of the gay youth of England, and yet the learned friend and counsellor of her wisest statesmen. Although capable of deep, earnest, philosophical thought, he also found time for minute attention to all details of becoming dress and personal ornament, while his dauntless spirit of daring enterprise exalted him even among the most practical and hardy English soldiers, sailors, and travellers.

Of his works, perhaps his "History of the World" attracted most attention. It was written in prison shortly before his execution in James the First's reign. Yet this unfinished work, referring entirely to ancient times, had no influence on the illustrious writer's own country.¹ He had, however, practically encouraged English taste for colonisation and travel

orator, the poet, the historian, the philosopher."—Macaulay's Essay on Burleigh and his Times.

¹ Hallam's "Literary History," Vol. 3rd.

by narrating his voyages, as well as by personal example in them.

Raleigh's whole life and career more resembled a hero of romance than an able man of the world, both of which usually opposing characters he united in his rare personal instance. While he charmed English society, and induced many brave young fellow-countrymen to accompany him in his American voyages, he headed no political party, took no active part in politics, but displayed to his admiring nation a wonderful combination of great qualities often imagined in fiction but rarely found in real life.

CHAPTER VI

SHAKESPEARE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616), some years younger than Raleigh, composed in obscurity those immortal works which successive ages have appreciated more and more. Shakespeare, as far as is known, lived like a private man, compared to the brilliant, dashing Raleigh, who, till his final imprisonment, was often attracting public attention and notice. Shakespeare, on the contrary, either by desire or necessity, lived and wrote in comparative retirement.¹ Though often in London, he took no part in political, but must have mingled in social, life, owing to his theatrical taste and connection.

The unrivalled merit of his works was almost unknown, not only during his obscure life, but for some generations after all that was mortal of him passed away. Unlike Bacon, nothing in his will indicated either opinion, wish, or interest about future literary fame. He vanished as quietly as he had

¹ Staunton's Preface to the "Illustrated" and Mr. Furnivall's Introduction to the "Royal" Shakespeare.

lived. No public manifestation of sorrow, no recognition of departed genius, no sense of national loss attended the unnoticed disappearance of England's, perhaps of the world's, greatest writer. Many years were to elapse before fellow-countrymen under different auspices, different rulers, laws, manners, customs and education, perceived amid the brightness of increasing knowledge and intellectual improvement that a greater mind than that of living rivals, yet without their advantages, had thought and written when comparatively unknown.

His works had little, if any, influence in his lifetime. Perhaps his admirable judgment in advising actors might have slightly improved some he had known, though his obscure position in London would probably have procured him contempt, if not insult, rather than attentive obedience, from those in whom he wished to inspire new ideas of dramatic performance.¹ From the earnest, almost nervous, style in which he censures the acting he had evidently seen, he certainly longed, but had neither sufficient influence nor authority, to "reform it altogether." This task was probably beyond his social, or political power, though well suited to his incomparable genius. Many English generations passed away before his excellent

¹ Hamlet to the actors—"In the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. Oh, it offends me to the very soul to hear a robustious, periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings. I would have such a fellow whipt."—"Hamlet," Act III.

advice to actors was not only approved, but generally followed, at least in attempt, by all eminent men in the profession.¹

Like Bacon's belief in his recognition by posterity, true appreciation of Shakespeare accompanied the literary progress of Englishmen. His private life and social obscurity during ardent political and religious excitement prevented his grand intellect which composed not for an age, but for all time, being known to cotemporaries or even to an immediate posterity, of whom the few possessing any learning were mostly engrossed by the politics or religious contests of the period.

Shakespeare was suited for a very different age to fully comprehend, value, and appreciate. Even the subsequent distracted time of the rebellion against Charles I. was peculiarly unsuited to the diffusion of Shakespeare's works.

The unfortunate king certainly admired them, which proves that in the beginning of his reign they were known among the nobility. But Shakespeare, though no politician when the monarchy was secure, always favoured that system. His admiring interest in kings, queens, princes, and princesses, appears through all his historical plays.

¹ "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of Nature, for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first and now was and is to hold as it were the mirror up to Nature, to shew virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure."—"Hamlet," Act III.

When writing in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., though both sovereigns were sometimes in personal danger, yet the monarchical system itself was never resisted, nor in any way opposed. There were, indeed, rival competitors for the crown, conspiracies and threats of foreign invasion. But the idea of a republic, or military dictatorship, in place of a deposed sovereign was either never thought of, or at least never openly advocated. Yet both these changes England was fated to experience, though not even Shakespeare's genius could foresee such a future. It was natural, therefore, that the triumphant republicans, like Cromwell's military enthusiasts who supplanted them, should both condemn Shakespeare's works.¹ There were sound political reasons for their animosity.

Shakespeare, as England's future proved, took the surest way an author could to render monarchy popular amongst its people. He found his nation deeply attached to its principle, and he confirmed its ancient traditional hold on the veneration and respect of his fellow-Englishmen with all the power of his poetic splendour.² He knew that the favourite plan of enemies to monarchy, sometimes justified by unworthy sovereigns, was to represent all monarchs as

¹ Scott's remarks in his novel of "Woodstock," also the Histories of Hume and Macaulay.

² "With Shakespeare, as with his fellow-countrymen, the Crown is still the centre and safeguard of the national life. His ideal England is an England grouped around a noble king."—Green's "History of the English People," Vol. 2nd, Book 6th.

hard-hearted, tyrannical, utterly indifferent to their subjects' welfare, and devoid of all sense of duty. He, therefore, constantly describes them in most interesting, heroic, and pathetic situations.

From King John to Henry VIII., inclusive, all English kings are made more or less interesting. Even John himself, a choice specimen for the most ardent republican to denounce without much risk of exaggeration, Shakespeare makes finally an object of compassion, while the attractive descriptions of the Princes Arthur and Henry, as well as Queen Constance, would gratify the most sincere loyalist of their times.

Had not Shakespeare been a thorough monarchist, John's disgraceful reign might have inspired him with hints, sarcasms, even descriptions hostile to kingly power. But, in accordance with history, the last scene of the play leaves the young king, Henry III., surrounded by loyal new subjects, eagerly vowing allegiance, thus proving that John's odious character had neither in reality, nor in Shakespeare's mind, weakened in the least that attachment to monarchy, which alike distinguished the poet and his nation.

From historical evidence, transmitted through literature by legal enactment and public manifestation, the spirit of Shakespeare's historical plays represents, with remarkable accuracy, the political feelings of his countrymen. But neither he nor any of his contemporaries could foresee the extraordinary political changes that were approaching. The brief, yet absolute, triumph of the republican Independents, who

soon obeyed Cromwell's dictatorship, was, indeed, a new feature in England's history.

Most of them, like their Puritan allies, with few exceptions, viewed not only Shakespeare's plays but all artistic beauty with destructive as well as fanatical abhorrence.¹ The whole style, spirit, and policy revealed by Shakespeare, completely opposed those of the brave, energetic faction, which, though never very numerous in England, acquired under Cromwell's command, a short, but complete, supremacy.

In successive historical plays, Shakespeare induces readers to admire, pity, or take special interest in the royal personages. In *Richard II.*, even that reckless young king is pitied at last, while his noble uncle, John of Gaunt, and the gallant Bolingbroke, his son, afterwards *Henry IV.*, claim admiration and interest. In the historically subsequent play of *Henry IV.*, that victorious king, after overcoming many revolts, conspiracies, and troubles, is described as eagerly maintaining and promoting his subjects' welfare. His last scene, where he exhorts his wild son, afterwards *Henry V.*, to do his duty to the English nation, and the fervent eloquence with which he foretells the probable ruin of England under a reckless king, is written in a spirit devoted to monarchy.

The same inclination appears in *Henry V.*, where the prince is transformed partly through the effect of his father's last words into a patriotic, noble sovereign.

¹ Macaulay has an amusing remark on this subject. "Nymphs and Graces, the work of Ionian chisels, were delivered over to Puritan stonemasons to be made decent."—"History of England," Vol. 1st, Ch. II.

He shares all the hardships of his soldiers in the French war, animating them by example and exhortation, while showing anxiety for their permanent welfare, as well as for their military triumph. This description being strictly historical,¹ is precisely fitted to make the name as well as the individual person of a king beloved, popular, and respected.

In the succeeding troubled reign of Henry VI., whose real timidity was a thorough contrast to his father and grandfather, Shakespeare had a long and difficult task to perform. It seems doubtful how much of this strange, inferior play was written by him.² Yet it was probably read, if not approved, by him before its publication under his name. Its views were, therefore, in all likelihood, not opposed to his, though expressed without that sense, power, and beauty which distinguish his undoubted productions. Hence, it is possible that the odious, distorted, almost vulgar sketch of Joan of Arc, though probably from its style not written by him, yet represented his belief in witchcraft.

In the present day, when such an idea is often thought incompatible, not only with genius or mental enlightenment, but with ordinary common sense, it may appear strange that Shakespeare could believe in it. But if the history of his times is carefully examined, with its legal powers, decrees, and enactments, together with the conduct of responsible

¹ Hallam's "Literary History," also Hume's "History of Henry V."

² Furnivall's Introduction to the "Royal" Shakespeare.

statesmen, and even the opinions of learned theologians about witchcraft, Shakespeare's believing in it seems not unlikely.¹

It was certainly believed in by the old and new divisions of the Christian Church. Papal decrees and the writings of the chief Reformers, Luther especially, alike express complete belief in it. While differing in points of doctrine, and even in some rules of conduct or political opinion, it is evident that for many years Catholics and Protestants agreed about the reality, and, therefore, the guilt and danger, of witchcraft.

In Shakespeare's time many alleged witches were executed in Scotland,² yet their fate elicited popular relief of mind and general thankfulness instead of indignation, disgust, or compassion.³ No appeal, representation, or remonstrance in their behalf was apparently made or contemplated. When these historic facts are considered, there is nothing very surprising in Shakespeare's believing in witchcraft, which may explain Joan of Arc's repulsive description, though its coarse, even absurd, style shows none of his genius.

In the vivid sketch of the bold democrat, Jack Cade, there are many signs of Shakespeare's wit, as

¹ See Lecky's "Rationalism," Vol. 1st, where the author calls Shakespeare's account of Joan "the darkest blot upon his genius."

² Strickland's "Life of Mary Queen of Scots," also Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor."

³ See Lecky's chapters on Witchcraft ("Rationalism," Vol. 1st), from which it seems that in England about Shakespeare's time witches were subject to death on the first conviction. This law was sanctioned by James I., who was a firm believer in witchcraft.

capital always loyal to monarchy.¹ Cade, though represented as wishing to be king, was thought by many a tool of the York faction trying to upset the reigning House of Lancaster.

But the poet describes merely a rude, ambitious, brutal demagogue, absurdly ignorant, and whose death, when half-starved, by the loyal Squire Iden's sword, is clearly meant to be rejoiced at and wholly unpitied. Yet this man's strange career gave Shakespeare ample means for making him interesting or, at least, deserving of some compassion. But he arouses no pity for him whatever, and if any such feeling lingered among Englishmen at this time, Shakespeare evidently did all he could to extinguish it. His exciting tragedy of "Richard III.," perhaps, exaggerates both the talents and vices of that desperate usurper, yet Shakespeare, by minutely describing his

¹ Cade, to his followers—"I fear neither sword nor fire." Dick, a butcher (*aside*)—"He should stand in fear of fire, being burnt in the hand for stealing sheep." Cade—"Be brave then, for your captain is brave, and vows reformation. There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny. All the realm shall be in common, and when I am king, as king I will be." All—"God save your Majesty." Cade—"I thank you, good people. There shall be no money; all shall eat and drink upon my score." Dick—"The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." Cade—"Nay, that I mean to do. Is it not a lamentable thing, that the skin of an innocent lamb should be made parchment, that parchment, being scribbled o'er, should undo a man? Some say 'tis the bee stings, but I say 'tis the bee's wax, for I did but seal once to a thing, and I was never my own man since."—"Henry VI.," Part II., Act IV.

heroic valour, which seems historically true, makes him highly interesting throughout.¹

Richmond, the future Henry VII., though only appearing at the end of the play, is evidently Shakespeare's special hero, and the beautiful speech at its close doubtless expressed the views and sentiments of the most prudent, patriotic Englishmen of his time.² The author's sympathies in this play, as in "Henry VI.," are more in favour of the suffering nobility than of the people during the wars they describe. Shakespeare was evidently true to history in this special sympathy, as during this civil war the English people suffered comparatively little, while the nobility were half-exterminated by opposing kings, though often at the instigation of rivals in their own class.³

In "Henry VIII.," the last, historically speaking, of Shakespeare's "dramatic chronicles," the London people's devotion to the almost absolute, yet popular, king is forcibly shown at the end, where their delight

¹ Hume's "History," also Bacon's "Life of Henry VII."

² "England hath long been mad and scarr'd herself.
Oh, now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together,
And let their heirs,
God, if Thy will be so,
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days."

³ Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. 1st; also Green's "History of the English People."

at seeing the royal family in state procession is not unlike what has been seen in the late Queen's reign. Shakespeare's evident wish is to endear English sovereigns to their subjects as much as possible. When he describes such kings as John or Richard III., he carefully represents their royal successors in the most amiable light as if to exclude all desire or idea of republican change. He, by this course, leaves the monarchical system, after being disgraced by evil kings, as popular as ever among his readers. Yet the influence of these plays was neither felt nor required when they were written.

Queen Elizabeth and James I., though threatened by political conspiracies and foreign enmity, had no fear of democratic revolt ; their foes were the subjected Catholics, who were devoted to monarchy. Shakespeare's views, though little known in his lifetime, owing to his personal obscurity, offended no party. But during the rebellion against Charles I., and Cromwell's subsequent rule, they were censured, condemned, and thereby excluded from public notice by the new government.¹

At Charles II.'s joyful restoration, an event involving not only popular cruelty to some republican victims, but the wildest public rejoicing, Shakespeare's monarchical spirit was shown by the English people, especially by London's population, to an almost fantastic extent. The whole nation seemed, as Macaulay indignantly

¹ Macaulay's "History of England," also Scott's remarks in "Woodstock" on the condemnation of Shakespeare's works by the triumphant Independents.

remarks, in a state of "drunken joy," and from this time the political as well as the literary value of Shakespeare's plays rose steadily in English estimation. Of all the unhistorical ones, probably none was more popular than "The Merchant of Venice."

The scorned, vindictive Jew, Shylock, claiming his "pound of flesh," is to this day known to all educated Englishmen. He is constantly compared to exacting, covetous men, especially among his community. Shakespeare fortunately wrote this most powerful, popular play when English Jews were no longer persecuted. In his time, indeed, the Jews, by denying Christianity altogether, were legally more safe from Christian enmity than fellow-Christians were from opposing sections of the divided faith.

Had Shakespeare written this play during King John's reign, when Jews were exposed not only to the king's torturing rapacity, but to general insult and dislike, it might have done great harm by increasing popular prejudices against them. But in Shakespeare's time, and ever since, English Jews had nothing to fear, except rude comparisons from the odious description of their Venetian co-religionist.

This remarkable play, however, may have inclined some gay young men about London to distrust Jewish money-lenders, who then, as now, doubtless tempted many prodigals and spendthrifts. This object Shakespeare may have contemplated, doubtless having personal friends, among gay young playgoers in London, but no legal or political annoyance to the Jews ever resulted from Shakespeare's famous work. The ardent,

bitter animosity between opposing Christians during and long after Shakespeare's time apparently quite engrossed them.

Neither Mohammedans nor Jews had now any reason to dread Christianity, whether inspired by the Papacy or by the Reformers, at least in England.

Few of Shakespeare's other plays apparently influenced, or were meant to influence, English social life, thought, or political opinion.

The old English legends of "King Lear" and "Cymbeline" had no special reference to mediæval or modern England. They furnished no certain historical information, though the former is indeed an admirable moral lesson for all time.

The Scottish tragedy of "Macbeth," founded so much on fact as to perhaps entitle it to be called a historical play, introduced supposed witches, representing actual personages who met the real Macbeth of history.¹ Their influence, limited power, but unlimited malignity, are described with a genius and force utterly different indeed from the absurd, distorted sketch of Joan of Arc. Yet they seem of such a fanciful nature, their triumph being only permitted over Macbeth and his wife, while Prince Malcolm and his followers defy or ignore them, that no readers would be tempted to believe in witchcraft from their description. They seem introduced for dramatic effect, not through the author's belief in their existence.

Though Shakespeare may have believed in or been

¹ Holinshed's "Chronicles," also Walter Scott's "History of Scotland."

doubtful about witchcraft, the most ignorant or superstitious would hardly become more credulous from its description in "Macbeth." The effect of his writings on English history and character was, however, developed gradually, rather slowly, accompanying England's progress in education, knowledge, and civilisation.

His expressions are still constantly recalled in newspaper articles, as well as by political speakers, and are often inscribed on public buildings to express or celebrate martial exploits, or deeds of charity and munificence. Wherever they are quoted they seem, from their unrivalled power, genius, and truthfulness to excel in wisdom, expression, and beauty the language of all previous or subsequent writers, though the latter often possessed literary advantages unknown to Shakespeare.¹

During his life and for many years after, religious dissensions in England absorbed most literary men by inducing them to study controversial and theological works with almost exclusive attention.

Thus the poets' writings were comparatively unheeded or unappreciated till English minds, at length pacified after a long period of religious and political strife, were suited as well as inclined to their study. In the religious contest throughout Britain, in Shakespeare's time the Reformers, while often differing from each other, united against Catholicism, which made

¹ Macaulay says Shakespeare "has neither equal nor second," and that "his excellence is supreme and universal."—*Essay on Mitford's "Greece."* See also Brewer's remarks on the undiminished value of Shakespeare's works—"English Studies."

very slight opposition through literature to the learned attacks and political progress of Protestantism.

But on the Continent the works of Erasmus, Luther, and others were opposed by the writings of Bossuet, Fénelon and other literary champions of Catholicism, which, though superseded in the north of Europe, yet firmly retained mental ascendancy over the south. In Britain, Catholicism had few literary advocates, the British intellect generally favouring Protestantism though in differing forms, while the learning, genius, and brilliancy of Catholic writers abroad consoled British co-religionists by proving that Protestant intellectual as well as political triumph was confined to northern Europe. While, however, in Elizabeth's reign, sovereign and people alike opposed Catholicism, the religious contest in Scotland was a curious contrast to that in England, though both ended in Protestant triumph.

Mary of Scotland, unlike Elizabeth, was an utter contrast to her subjects. Educated in Catholic France, which she dearly loved, this most interesting of all queens, whose character is still a subject of dispute among historians, vainly tried to sustain the falling Church in Scotland. The Scottish nobility and people were, however, mostly Protestant, either Prelatist, or Presbyterian.

These divisions, often hostile to each other, were allied against Catholicism which viewed both with indiscriminate enmity. In this contest the English favoured the non-Catholic majority, while the French sympathised with Mary and the Catholic minority.

Yet neither English nor French took active part in the revolution which dethroned Mary and placed her son, afterwards James I., while an infant, on the Scottish throne.

During this contest the writings and preaching of George Buchanan and John Knox, in different ways, alike promoted Scottish Protestantism. No literary eloquence or ability on the Catholic side appeared to answer them. Knox, by denouncing Catholicism, and Buchanan, by accusing the queen of crimes, of which she was never proved either innocent or guilty, aided by unopposed literary efforts to alienate Scottish minds from Mary and transfer allegiance to the young king. In this attempt they succeeded. The charms of Queen Mary were, indeed, celebrated by the foreign poet and musician, Chastelar and Rizzio, residing at her Court, but the earnest efforts of Knox and Buchanan, aided alike by English alliance and French enmity, whose sympathy for Mary was fatal to her popularity in Scotland, completely triumphed.

The Scottish intellect as well as majority were decidedly non-Catholic, and thus the English and Scottish nations made a firm Protestant union under James I., who became undisputed king of Great Britain and Ireland. His accession politically established Protestantism throughout the three kingdoms.

In opposition to Catholicism and obedience to James, England and Scotland were fully agreed, justly meriting their new designation of United Great Britain. But Ireland, in religious thought and

political feeling, was a contrast to both, presenting a remarkable study to the historical inquirer.

The non-Catholic minority, descended from English and Scottish, fully shared British religious and political opinions, being encouraged and protected by the Government, to which they were loyally devoted. In wealth, education, and political knowledge, they had many advantages over the Irish Catholic majority. The latter, since the loss of national independence, and the flight or submission of the native chiefs, were guided in politics as well as in religion by their clergy, whom they trusted the more implicitly, since Protestantism, stoutly maintained by British colonists, identified it in their minds with political conquest and colonisation.

The Irish clergy, though thought ignorant and bigoted, by hostile colonists, delighted with the new Protestant doctrine, literature, and policy of Britain, yet maintained a close intellectual and religious connection with southern Europe. In France, Spain, and Italy the Irish priests found their oppressed Church in complete, even haughty, triumph.¹ All dissent from its doctrines was considered both politically and religiously dangerous, and therefore

¹ "It is impossible to doubt that in the 16th and 17th centuries the Protestant or reformed faith was greatly checked by the temporal power of the Catholic governments. It was checked in two ways by preventing its entrance into a country, as in Italy and Spain, and by expelling it from countries where it had taken root, as in southern Germany, France, and Flanders."—Sir. G. C. Lewis's "Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion," p. 292.

suppressed with zealous, immediate severity.¹ Thus its intellectual as well as political position was the precise reverse of what it occupied in Britain and Ireland.

Though a few Protestant or sceptical minds in France, Spain, and Italy opposed Catholicism, and in France acquired some influence for a short time, yet the intellect and political power of these countries steadily maintained it, while the non-Catholics in southern Europe apparently made no definite alliance with the successful Protestants in the north.² The Irish Catholic clergy, therefore, accustomed to associate their faith at home with poverty and legal oppression, found it thoroughly triumphant in southern Europe, supported by almost despotic power, favoured by all the devotion of art, wealth, and intellect, and firmly maintained by the national conviction.³

They returned to Ireland often enlightened, even accomplished, owing to instruction derived from the Continent, yet prejudiced and hostile respecting all recent changes in British literary thought, feeling, and sentiment. Hence the scornful anger and political

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages," Buckle's "Civilisation"; also Sir. G. C. Lewis's "Influence of Authority."

² Hallam's "Middle Ages," Buckle's "Civilisation," and Macaulay's Essay on Ranke's "History of the Popes."

³ "Governments have attempted to extirpate religious error by persecution, and to favour religious truth by endowment, but as the governments of different countries adopted different creeds, that which was considered religious error by one government was considered religious truth by another."—Sir G. C. Lewis's "Influence of Authority," p. 75.

suspicion with which they were viewed by most Protestant writers on Ireland, who saw little in them but implacable hatred to Protestantism, which tended both to maintain and increase the ancient Irish enmity to England. Britain and northern Germany were now the religious examples, allies, and supporters of Irish non-Catholics, while the unshaken devotion of southern Europe to the intellectual and religious supremacy of the Pope was the consolation, example, and hope of the Irish Catholic majority.

The almost incredible animosity, however, between Irish religious divisions has always prevented their either acknowledging or perhaps believing in the intellectual gifts, as well as the redeeming qualities, of each other. Irish literary talent, therefore, has been usually devoted with lamentable success to irritate passions, rather than to soothe them. Readers of most Irish histories will generally find that the talents and enthusiasm of the authors, render their prejudices even more dangerous and misleading than the comparatively stupid bigotry of ignorant or frivolous believers.

CHAPTER VII

THE HOUSE OF STUART

JAMES I.'s accession early in the 17th century found most of his British subjects firmly opposed to Catholicism. Popular literature, historic recollections, and foreign enmities aided to produce this result in Great Britain. The sufferings of Protestants in Mary Tudor's reign were described and pictorially illustrated in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," written and published in Elizabeth's reign, but the full effect of its study appeared in the prejudiced horror with which Catholicism was generally regarded in James I.'s reign. This feeling was shared by the king, a weak, pedantic monarch,¹ yet not without shrewdness and intelligence.

He earnestly tried to strengthen Protestantism in Ireland by "planting," as it was then called, a colony of enterprising, industrious British Protestants in its northern counties. This settlement, called the Plantation of Ulster, was highly favoured by the British

¹ See Macaulay's description of James I.—"History of England," Vol. 1st; also Scott's account in "Nigel." Both these eminent Scotchmen give much the same account of the king.

Government, justly thinking it a loyal garrison amid a hostile population. These colonists, however, while preserving their faith with resolute, conscientious tenacity, had neither the power, nor perhaps inclination, to diffuse it among the surrounding Catholic majority, who thought them, and were thought by them, hereditary foes in religion and race.

Some French Protestants, or their descendants, expelled from Catholic France for alleged rebellion,¹ aided in colonising Ulster, and increased by their history the religious enmity of British colonists to Irish Catholics. In all theological strife, as proved by the popularity of Foxe's work, the thorough partiality of authors and readers is evident. All sympathy, all admiration, all interest are claimed exclusively for Protestants, while Catholics are represented as mere fanatics, slaying fellow-creatures without any admitted provocation. Yet it must be owned that this work, written soon after religious strife was at its height, told much truth, but certainly not the whole truth. Had impartial truth been told, it would probably have produced a different result. Intelligent readers would then have found that persecution for religious opinions was, in its principle, fully sanctioned by many distinguished Protestants.² Most Christian denominations also denounced death against all persons thought guilty of witchcraft.³ Nothing

¹ See Buckle's "Civilisation."

² Hallam's "Middle Ages," Buckle's and Guizot's "Histories of Civilisation," and Lecky's "Rationalism."

³ Lecky's "Rationalism," also Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor."

less than the extreme penalty of the law inflicted in its cruellest form was thought sufficient for the sins of those who, whether guilty of damnable superstition, heresy, or witchcraft, were alike foes to God, and instruments or followers of Satan. It seems, therefore, that one of the first employments of printing was to expose people to legal punishment for matters of opinion.

Papal anathemas against heresy accompanied Protestant denunciations not only of Catholicism, but of differing sections of Protestantism.¹ The result of combined learning, zeal, and earnestness in promoting religious intolerance or persecution, appears in the literature of this time, especially in its legal acts and political enforcements, which both illustrated and obeyed such teaching.²

One of the first and most eminent Prelatist divines, Richard Hooker (1553-1600), in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," had vainly deprecated religious bigotry, but the practical recognition of his excellent book was

¹ See Guizot's and Buckle's "Histories of Civilisation," Hallam's "Middle Ages," and Lecky's "Rationalism."

² "Until the age of the Reformation, the received doctrine in Christian England was that the State was bound to treat religious error as a crime, and to punish heresy as it would punish homicide or theft. Conformity, exile, or death were the three alternatives. Notwithstanding the complaints justly made by the Presbyterians of England and Scotland with respect to their treatment by the Established [Prelatist] Church, they, nevertheless, when they had the power, showed a similar disposition to enforce their own faith by penal sanctions."—Sir G. C. Lewis's "Influence of Authority," p. 292-3.

reserved for a much later period. It perhaps convinced a few thoughtful, just persons, but with zealous theologians, eager politicians, or ambitious statesmen, it could have little effect. Like the immortal writings of Bacon and Shakespeare, the work of Hooker awaited the lapse of generations for the appreciation of a posterity in whom it aroused or aided to arouse the spirit of practical Christianity.

Yet while the great thoughts of a few noble minds remained long almost unnoticed, the dangerous intrigues of eager politicians and the yet more, perhaps, dangerous bigotry of ardent theologians ruled British thought, legislation, and policy throughout James I.'s reign.

The Gunpowder Plot, devised by a few desperate Roman Catholics, for the destruction of the king and parliament, and the Protestant settlement of Ulster were both instances in this reign of Protestant distrust, and Catholic desperation. Catholicism now seemed, in the estimation of most learned British minds, to be generally abandoned, and its restoration, either to moral or political influence, almost impossible. But at the very time when it seemed weakest, the fierce quarrels between its religious successors to some extent revived it, when its own efforts had apparently failed.

At James I.'s death, the accession of his son, Charles I., found Great Britain no longer dreading Catholicism, but distracted by violent disputes among the triumphant non-Catholic divisions. Charles, a man more artistic than literary, though a lover of

Shakespeare, took apparently little interest in religious controversy,¹ yet as head of the English Prelatist Church he showed some dislike to Dissenters. This dislike or apprehension was probably more political than sectarian. It soon appeared that he was more opposed by them than by the Catholics, who, dreading political revolt on the Continent, owing to its association with Protestantism, or infidelity in southern Europe, were thoroughly loyal to established monarchy.

Of all the king's foes the Independents were the boldest, the most hostile, and most enterprising. Though always in a minority, they included in their limited number the two greatest living Englishmen, Oliver Cromwell and John Milton. These illustrious men, differing greatly in tastes, talents, and private habits, made a remarkable alliance, causing most important results to England. The one apparently possessed almost every human gift in which the other was deficient. The unrivalled military talent, practical knowledge of men, dauntless courage, and immense energy of Cromwell, were well aided by the educational superiority and literary genius of Milton, which were likewise unrivalled at this time. Thus the unfortunate king found his two most illustrious subjects allied against him.

No longer, as in former times, had the English monarch to oppose rival relations or foreign enemies. His foes were now among the most enterprising, zealous, and energetic of his subjects, headed, advo-

¹ Macaulay's "History," Vol. 1st.

cated, and represented by the two greatest intellects among them. Yet Charles, calm, proud, and resolute, a thorough contrast to his timid father, appealed to the nation generally against a brave, hostile minority. The result of consequent civil war or revolution occasioned his execution, accompanied by the establishment of the Commonwealth, and soon followed by the almost absolute rule of Cromwell.

The literary influence of his great ally or subject, Milton (1608-1674), zealously favoured this political change. Milton's literary royalist opponent, Lord Clarendon, who was born in the same and died in the same year as the poet, and another royalist writer, Bishop Gauden (1605-1664), wrote in behalf of monarchy and the king's memory. The former in his "History of the Revolution," the latter in a remarkable work, the "Royal Image," pathetically described and deplored the king's character and execution. But while Cromwell lived nothing could shake his political power. Though only supported by a gallant minority, he ruled, unopposed, while his intellectual ally, Milton, in English, French, or Latin, advised, justified, and praised his political chief with the devoted obedience of a favourite minister, rather than that of an alleged republican.¹ He eagerly attacked Bishop Gauden's singular work, in which that prelate, praising the king's courage at execution, deplored and described the event, most minutely appealing to the English nation to lament and avenge it.

¹ Milton's prose works.

In this appeal a foreign writer, Salmasius, joined, in a literary attack on the English revolution, and to answer both these writers was Milton's congenial task. Accordingly in his "Iconoclast, or Image Breaker," "Defensio Populi," and other works, Milton, with an abusive violence almost incredible in a man of his refinement, vindicates his nation, or rather its small triumphant minority, with eager vehemence. The principle of liberty is evidently almost avowedly ignored by this political poet, especially when writing on Peace with Irish rebels.

The state of Ireland during the reigns of Charles I. and Cromwell had so thoroughly irritated British republicans that all who opposed them, even Protestant colonists, were declared "guilty of rebellion."¹

Yet, despite Cromwell's complete triumph, even despite his real love for England, which no candid opponent could deny, neither his acquisition nor tenure of power were ever popular, even in Britain; while in Ireland, besides being distrusted by the loyal Protestant minority, he was viewed by the Catholic majority as the incarnation of English cruelty of former times, armed with all the destructive power of his own.

At his peaceful death, having escaped threatened murder, which alone his brave spirit dreaded,² this

¹ See Milton's "Peace with Irish Rebels," where he calls the reluctance of Ulster Presbyterians to obey Cromwell the "guilt of rebellion," though against a Government established by it.

² See Clarendon's "History," where Cromwell's fear of assassination is graphically described.

wise, successful, yet unpopular ruler, who, though leading republicans, was no practical admirer of their views, bequeathed all political power, in the true spirit of monarchical primogeniture, to his eldest son, Richard. This man had neither the talent nor inclination for political authority, which he soon abandoned. His abdication was soon followed by restoration of the monarchy, which spread universal joy throughout England, evidently caused by popular love of that system, without reference to its almost unknown representative.

Nothing in Charles II.'s conduct or dissolute, frivolous nature roused, or was meant to rouse, attachment or respect. Yet at his accession not only were Cromwell's bones hung on a gibbet, but some of his old followers were eagerly executed for their long previous share or guilt in the late king's death. Their public executions in London were accompanied with every sign of popular rejoicing, and even enthusiasm. Their last words were lost amid "the hisses and execrations of thousands."¹ All Cromwell's triumphs in war and policy, all experience of his wise, judicious, and successful rule thus resulted in every possible insult to his memory.

The spirit of Shakespeare's historical play, where the loyal Squire Iden lays the head of the brave, famished Jack Cade before the timid Henry VI., seemed now revived. All Milton's intellectual influence also completely vanished with the supremacy of Cromwell, under which it had vainly tried to animate

¹ Macaulay's "History of England."

the English nation. The spirit of Clarendon's History, if not Gauden's work, both rather resembling that of Shakespeare in devotion to monarchy, now completely prevailed. Its triumph, in some respects, was almost absurdly illustrated in the triumphant entrance into London of a profligate prince, who had never benefited England in any way, while the remains of its late sagacious and, in many respects, patriotic ruler were exposed to the most scandalous insult.

This disgraceful act, like the more cruel one of executing some old regicides, can hardly be considered chiefly the work of a London mob. There seems reason to believe from the uncensored, if not approving, publicity of these deeds, that they were sanctioned by public opinion generally, though doubtless secretly deplored by some private individuals. But restoration of monarchy, though represented by a worthless king, was decidedly supported by the British public mind.

Clarendon's History, and even Gauden's alleged work, comparing Charles I.'s execution to Christ's crucifixion, evidently to some extent represented the feelings of the English nation generally, but especially of the London population. As Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, and the royal palace were associated with kings, queens, princes and princesses, again might Shakespeare have described the same loyal enthusiasm in London streets which he introduces with evident pleasure at the close of "Henry VIII."

But his sublime genius was now unworthily replaced in popularity by the sarcastic, quaint, witty Samuel Butler (1612-1680). In his poem of "Hudibras," naturally a favourite with Charles II. and his profligate Court, the fallen Independents and their Puritan allies were abused with bitter, even fierce, ridicule. All their faults were mercilessly exposed and exaggerated, while, in the usual spirit of an unscrupulous religious or political opponent, everything that could be said in their favour was purposely ignored.

Meantime Milton, though spared from public prosecution, lived in retirement, deploring the utter failure of his political ideas and efforts for England. In bitter, morose dejection, he now wrote those sublime poems "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained," which forced from all sections of his fellow-countrymen the highest admiration. Yet in the former he cannot resist lamenting with evident bitterness having "fallen on evil days, by evil tongues surrounded." He mentions hearing "the barbarous dissonance of Bacchus and his revellers," doubtless meaning some tipsy London royalists singing loyal songs with more zeal than harmony.

These rejoicings, judging from every sign of probability in Shakespeare's plays, would have had that poet's cordial approval, even despite their occasional intemperance. The gay Lucios, Cassios, Gratianos, &c., whom he describes with evident liking, much resembled, probably, the English royalists or courtiers

whom Scott reproduces throughout the Waverley novels.¹

Yet Milton, despite the dislike of his party to Shakespeare's works, always admired them. His poetic taste in this one noble instance overcame party prejudice. He viewed "Sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child" as an illustrious fellow-poet, not as a political opponent. In old age, however, Milton, forced to abandon politics, devoted his great mind, as some others have done, to literature for consolation, as well as occupation.

In England, Charles II.'s unmerited popularity continued with little abatement all his life, while religious more than political dissensions in Britain, Scotland especially, absorbed much of the literary talent of the time. These quarrels between Protestant divisions again encouraged the dispirited Catholics, who found a powerful if not unexpected friend in the king's brother and heir, James, Duke of York.

The alarm of the Protestants at the prospect of this successor to the crown inclined some to encourage Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, to attempt or threaten a revolt, and the aid of literature, prompt, attractive, and able, appeared in a work of the Court poet, John Dryden (1631-1700). This poem, called "Absalom and Ahithophel," meaning Monmouth and his adviser, Lord Shaftesbury, appeared when the former's mutinous conduct roused

¹ "Woodstock," "Black Dwarf," and "Peveril of the Peak."

fears of his future rebellion, fatally verified in the ensuing reign of James II.

Dryden warmly praises the indolent, voluptuous Charles, who at his death desired no other successor than his legitimate brother, who therefore became king without opposition. But soon after his accession some apprehensive Protestants rose in rebellion in England and Scotland, headed by Monmouth in the former and the Earl of Argyll in the latter. Their joint revolt being speedily suppressed left James in firm possession of the throne.

Dryden's pen was busily employed in the new king's praise. In his beautiful poem, "The Hind and the Panther," James is the generous "royal Lion" trying to protect the various animals under his rule. Among these, the most interesting, helpless, and persecuted is the Catholic Church—"the milk-white hind" "fated not to die," fearing no danger, and knowing no sin, &c. The non-Catholic animals are represented by the "Prelatist" panther, the "Presbyterian" wolf, the "Anabaptist" boar, the "Independent" bear, the "Socinian" fox, the "Quaker" hare, and the "Atheist" monkey. These are all more or less exposed to blame, hatred, and ridicule.

Dryden's clever comparisons of various animals to different religious sects must have been extremely irritating to all except the Catholics. Yet his own joyous, genial disposition, fully shown in his beautiful ode or drinking song of Alexander's Feast, apparently prevented his making personal enemies.

It was well known that there was no religious bigotry in his nature.¹ He skilfully compares Prelacy, professed by the English aristocracy and wealthier classes, to the sleek, graceful panther, externally beautiful, yet ferocious when roused.

Puritanism, professed by eager, zealous, poorer adherents, chiefly in Scotland, naturally more resembled the gaunt, hungry wolf. The Independents, rough and dangerous as Cromwell's soldiers certainly were to friends and foes, well represented a growling bear. The Socinian, whose faith never established in any country, was found among various denominations, and, reasonably afraid to state his opinions, was probably often forced to play a cunning, fox-like part in concealing them.

The likeness of Atheists to impudent, mocking monkeys was even shown in Voltaire's great instance, according to Macaulay.² Though it is doubtful if this extraordinary man was really an Atheist,³ he was certainly thought so by many religious men of his time, and Macaulay evidently shares their opinions. The "Quaker" here refusing to swear, not from fear, but from religious scruple, is certainly treated unjustly by a worldly, "slashing" writer like Dryden, little inclined to examine or appreciate conscientious motives.

The Catholic Church, as the harmless, threatened

¹ Johnson's "Life of Dryden," also Macaulay's Essay on him.

² Macaulay's remarks on Voltaire's "monkey-like grimacing and chattering."—"Essay on Frederick the Great."

³ John Morley's "Life of Voltaire."

deer, might well represent any form of Christianity when helpless and surrounded by fanatical enemies. Her position was that of many Christian divisions in turn, during religious persecution, and when Dryden wrote this poem it was, to some extent, occupied by insulted or oppressed Catholics throughout Britain and Ireland.

But in France, Spain, and Italy, armed with political power, the milk-white hind became a very different animal, and disposed of metaphorical panthers, wolves, bears, and monkeys with rigid impartiality.

This strange poem was indeed a remarkable literary achievement. It was written with the royal favour,¹ and certainly displayed much attractive ability. Yet it practically showed the ablest English poet of his time arousing bitter enmity among fellow-countrymen on account of their religious differences alone. It was written for the evident purpose of recalling the British nation to the old faith by exposing, not without some truth, the fierce, bigoted quarrels among Protestant divisions, who yet agreed in persecuting or condemning Catholicism.

Dryden's keen satire about many distinguished Englishmen was either so ably expressed or generally popular as to cause him personally neither disgrace, danger, nor enmity. Patronised by the Court, and a favourite with the public, "glorious John Dryden" showed neither Shakespeare's caution nor Milton's bitterness. He was a thoroughly worldly, time-

¹ Macaulay's "History."

serving writer. His religion also seemed doubtful, as in some works he apparently inclined to Protestantism. He was always, however, an ardent royalist, while suspected of not much earnestness in theological opinions.

Unlike his poetical predecessor, Butler, who had so delighted triumphant Prelatists by ridiculing the fallen Puritans and Independents, Dryden's joyous spirit seemed revealed in his best poem, *Alexander's Feast*—"Take the goods the gods provide thee." This cheerful sentiment appeared the practical rule of his gay, social life. He tried, indeed, amid religious strife to please whichever party was in the ascendant, and apparently succeeded tolerably in this desirable, yet often impossible, task. He certainly excited little, if any, indignation among the fiery spirits of his age, with whom he was a general favourite. His chief object, at least for some time, was to praise the conduct, and thereby strengthen the position, of James II.

Dryden, however, though personally popular, was soon opposed in the literary world by Protestant theologians. In fact, the British intellect generally opposed the spirit of his "*Hind and the Panther*," which, of all his works, referred with most ability to England's religious state. The disputes between the various Protestant sects, some of whom had shown a decided republican tendency, finally induced James to place the white deer in absolute authority over the other animals. The result was their united revolt against him, causing his deposition and banishment,

and the change roused the spirit of literature in Protestant writers of different denominations.

Among them John Locke (1632-1704) was perhaps the ablest, from his philosophic genius, learning, and high character. Yet this eminent man, being persecuted by Catholic influence, though a great advocate of self-control, could not force even his calm mind to practically prove it by returning good for evil. His Letter on Toleration, which received great attention from English minds, excluded Catholicism from any claim to it, because of its denying it to other religions. This argument, however, was inconsistent with the fact of the Jews having enjoyed toleration, though not much indulgence, for a long period under the Catholic Governments of Europe. Yet at the Reformation, Catholics and Protestants alike justified intolerance towards one another more than to avowed non-Christians. Even Scottish Prelatists and Presbyterians, till forced to unite against Catholics, opposed toleration to each other, though their religious differences were comparatively slight and thought equally heretical by Catholics.

Politically allied by their common distrust of the Catholic king, many British non-Catholics were influenced by Locke's appeal to their religious interests.

The English public, during the previous reign of Charles II., had much favoured the London comic dramatists, who specially enjoyed ridiculing Puritans and Independents, but owing to the tyrannical rashness of James II., popular dislike to Catholicism, as

in the time of Elizabeth, soon revived. The rule of the Independents under Cromwell, though almost absolute, was very short; he alone had upheld the political power of that brave minority. With his death their supremacy disappeared.

The anti-Catholic influence of Locke, and other writers, now gradually united all contending Protestants in a common league against the unpopular king, whose religion, views, and policy recalled those of Mary Tudor and Philip of Spain. Locke's chief work, "Concerning Human Understanding," had no immediate reference to the history of his troubled time. Yet its result, by arousing, directing, and encouraging philosophical inquiry, together with its author's well-known political views, caused it to be disliked or suspected by religious and political opponents. Locke, however, took no part in public affairs. His views on toleration, indulgent to all Protestants, but excluding Catholics, found indirect support in the singular ideas of his cotemporary, John Bunyan (1628-1688). This man's chief work, "The Pilgrim's Progress," was popular throughout Britain and the north of Ireland, where its anti-Catholic spirit made it the more admired. Though it made no direct political allusion, it specially suited British Dissenters while attacking Catholicism in the form of "Giant Pope," a supposed enemy to the human race. The British nobility, also, Bunyan censures bitterly in the imaginary specimens, Lords Hategood, Carnal Delight, &c., whose names, denoting their characters, were supposed to represent an existing, vicious class.

This quaint production, fervent, simple, and well-meaning, yet sadly distorted by political and religious prejudices, was probably more popular in England when it appeared than it would have been at any other historical period. It seemed to derive existence from the distracted state of the country, when a sincere, devout Christian, really wishing to benefit his fellow-countrymen, yet could scarcely perceive or believe in any virtue or right feeling, except in those who shared his own opinions. Yet his views were openly hostile to both the former religion and to most of the leading men of his own country.

Bunyan, who was himself a relic of Cromwell's army, took no part in politics. His remarkable book, like Locke's works, greatly influenced the British mind of their times, without either writer acquiring the fame or incurring the odium of responsible politicians. When their opinions, however, are calmly examined with reference to England's history, rather than their own intellectual merit, it would seem that by different arguments they arrive at a similar practical conclusion to that of Catholic theologians. They alike advised or approved of the suppression by legal means of opposing forms of Christianity, the same doctrines being thought undeniable truths by the one which were thought fatal errors by the other.¹

¹ "The attempt to propagate religious truth and to crush religious error by the criminal law and by penal inflictions, though it has, to a certain extent, met with very decided success, is subject to strong counteracting forces. True opinion in religion can, in the long run,

At this time Continental Catholicism, unlike its position in Britain, found literary champions whose works ably defended it against Protestant or infidel foes.¹

Of these Bishop Bossuet's *Universal History* was one of the grandest efforts. Though written in French, it was doubtless known to most literary Roman Catholics in Britain. Its immense learning and zealous ability proved its author a worthy foe of the Protestant writers of his time. Yet neither Bossuet nor other foreign Catholic writers were emulated by their British co-religionists, who, politically distrusted or powerless, had showed neither the ability nor inclination to answer literary opponents among the non-Catholic majority.

Many of the British public sharing the views of Milton, Bunyan, Locke, &c., were therefore unjust to Catholic fellow-countrymen. Indeed, from the lessons of religious persecution detailed, if not exaggerated, by such works as "*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*," &c., containing some truth, yet avowedly partial, the British intellect was thoroughly prejudiced against Catholicism at this time.

Those following the eminent Protestant or Catholic only be propagated by reason and that voluntary deference to authority which implies reason, but false opinion in religion can be as well propagated by force as true ones. The sword, the stake, or the gibbet are as good arguments in behalf of Mahometanism as of Christianity."—Sir G. C. Lewis's "*Influence of Authority*," p. 294-5.

¹ Hallam's "*Literary History*," Vol. 4th, on the position of divided Christianity in Europe at this time.

writers at home and abroad became divided, as it were, into hostile camps, each forbidding or discouraging a fair study of each other. Few Christian minds were disposed to calmly compare their rival merits, arguments, or opinions. In Britain and northern Europe generally, Protestantism in different forms, prevailed among the most learned and illustrious men, many of whom believed Catholicism not only a superstition, but little better than the ancient Paganism of Rome, in which real Christianity was hardly to be found.

Throughout southern Europe the highest intellects were, as a rule, on its side, associating its authority with political safety, good order, and social security, as well as undeniable religious truth. European legislation faithfully expressed the religious feelings of different nations which could only be known to a minority through the medium of literature at this period. Thus the spirit of British legislation against "Popery" as a false, dangerous system, much resembled the laws against "Heresy" throughout France, Spain, and Italy.¹

Some British Protestants could hardly believe there could be such intellectual writers as Bossuet and Fénelon in favour of Catholicism. It was also difficult to understand from Bossuet's learned, majestic, and comprehensive censure of all Protestants, that men much more like him than many of his admirers attacked the same doctrine he zealously defended.

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages," also Sir G. C. Lewis's "Influence of Authority."

At this time, when sincere, accomplished, successful Reformers were believing, hoping, and declaring that Catholicism was fast disappearing and mainly supported by ignorant clergy or selfish kings through religious bigotry or political interest, Bossuet's great work appeared in its defence. In some respects its vast learning, earnestness, and ability contradicted these assertions.

His mind ranged over ancient, mediæval, and comparatively modern history, while his unshaken devotion to Roman Catholicism was evidently his leading idea and motive. In his work much the same learning, energy, and firm conviction which often inspired the Reformers in attacking Catholicism were now devoted to its interests, defence, and glorification.

Yet it was fated that for many centuries in European history the greatest Christian minds should not only differ from, but depreciate as well as persecute each other. All oppression of helpless Jews, all enmity to warlike Mohammedans comparatively disappeared from the Christian world when perverting its intellectual powers and legal ingenuity to suppress hostile divisions of the same creed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVOLUTION—THE HOUSE OF HANOVER

THE accession of William III. established a religious toleration very favourable to literature. Though neither literary nor artistic himself, his political knowledge, views, and position made him check all intolerance and promote general freedom of thought and utterance.

His policy was at first blamed by opposing sections of his divided subjects. Hence the remarkable alliance against him of Tory Prelatists with Presbyterian Covenanters in Scotland. These previously mortal foes alike opposed William, who, either from prudence or humanity, wished to unite his subjects as far as possible by enlisting on his side the moderate of all parties. This policy was finally successful, rendering the stern, impartial king far more worthy than James II. of Dryden's title of the Royal Lion protecting divided subjects from each other.¹

¹ Bishop Burnet's "Memoirs of his Times," Macaulay's "History," and Scott's "Old Mortality." These eminent writers, the divine, the historian, and the novelist, agree in admiring the civilising, beneficial effects of William's policy.

But poetic praise was apparently not much sought or coveted by this shrewd, practical monarch, under whose firm rule, however, legal toleration became prevalent. Literature also became inspired by a more just, considerate spirit than previously. Bishop Burnet (1643-1715), at once divine, historian, and politician, greatly aided by the zeal, sincerity, and fairness of his writings and character to pacify and enlighten the British mind of his time.

He knew personally the three kings, Charles II., James II., and William III. His high social standing and estimation, fortunately for England, probably made his works more politically influential than those of his clerical predecessor, Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), who rather resembled him in combined Christian zeal and charity, yet whose religious advice had apparently little effect during his agitated times.

While Burnet wrote, preached, and exhorted, the great thoughts of Isaac Newton (1642-1727), like those of Locke, were gradually made known through the diffusion of printing to a small minority of learned minds throughout Europe, but were not meant to have political influence. Towards the close of William III.'s eventful reign there was a comparative lull in the religious contests of Europe. Protestant countries no longer dreaded a Catholic revival as before, while Catholic countries began to be more threatened by infidelity than by Protestantism.¹

No writer at this time in England had such a

¹ Macaulay's "Essay on Ranke," Hallam's "Literary History," and Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

useful popular influence as Joseph Addison (1672-1719). This calm, consistent teacher and moralist lived chiefly in London. Though he took some part in politics, he was mostly known by literary talents, estimable character, and social influence. In his popular magazine *The Spectator*, which, though aided by others, owed all its success to him,¹ he amused, instructed, and, as it were, civilised his fellow-countrymen with a moral success hardly known before in British literary history. He led the way in popularising English literature more than any previous writer had ever done. His moderate, truthful, calm style of thinking and writing encouraged Englishmen to study their country's history with a steady view to its moral improvement. His "Reflections in Westminster Abbey" showed how much he desired his country's good by keen appreciation of all who promoted it. His poem "The Campaign," comparing the heroic Marlborough to an angel riding in the whirlwind and directing the storm of battle, and some lines praising William III., while revealing his own politics, evince no bitterness of party feeling.

His admiration for all virtue and merit, unmingled with political and religious prejudices, proved him far in advance of his times. He was actuated by sincere and religious conviction, wholly independent of sectarian bigotry. His good-humoured sketches of English country gentry and opposing politicians represented in the Tory, Sir Roger de Coverley, and the Whig, Sir Andrew Freeport, were alike fitted to

¹ Macaulay's "Essay on Addison."

instruct and amuse the British public, especially the rural gentry, hitherto accustomed to associate political allusion with intolerant bitterness.

Addison was eminently qualified to encourage a general love of reading in England, and this object he accomplished most successfully. In politics he was the incarnation of moderate views, though a decided Whig. He, perhaps, represented, in his invincible love of truth and justice, the silent convictions of many Englishmen, which he expressed in the instructive permanent form of literary advice, anecdote, and illustration.¹

In moral, and probably in political influence, Addison surpassed his three literary cotemporaries, Dean Swift (1667-1745), Alexander Pope (1688-1744), and John Gay (1688-1732). Swift lived much in Ireland, but all his political views revealed in "The Drapier's Letters," "Tale of a Tub," &c., favour the British Protestant colonists, of whom he was indeed a brilliant specimen. Few Irish Protestants of his time thought or wrote for either the interests or applause of the Irish Catholic majority.

Macaulay even declares "they would as soon have appealed to the swine."² Yet this comparison might cause mistaken inference.

It was not probably because they thought them stupid, dull, or indifferent to human genius, but because Irish Catholics were entirely guided by their

¹ See Macaulay's opinion on the popular and beneficial influence of Addison's writings in *The Spectator*.—"Essay on Addison."

² "History of England," Vol. 4th, Ch. XII.

clergy, who were, in their turn, mainly directed in political as in religious principles by the Pope, and the Papacy, of course, could not sanction the deposition of the Stuarts.

About this time in France the generous, lavish, voluptuous king, Louis XIV., was the sympathising host of the exiled James II. and his family. James, it was said, fainted during service in a French chapel, while hearing an anthem which reminded him of his political degradation.¹ From the effects of this fit he never quite recovered. Even his usually dull, stern nature apparently yielded to emotion caused by the impressive words of Scripture. At his death, which occurred soon after, his son and grandson in due course were viewed by British Catholics, and even by some Protestants, as their lawful kings. Yet for some time no enthusiasm or literary effort appeared in their behalf, though both were to come.

The persecution of French Protestants by Louis XIV. made William III.'s rule, and subsequently that of his sister-in-law, Queen Anne, all the more popular in Great Britain. Most British and Irish writers were now Protestants.

The poet Pope, perhaps the most brilliant Catholic writer in England, took little or no part in politics. He devoted his talents to translating Homer's "Iliad,"

¹ "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us; consider and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our house to aliens, the crown is fallen from our head. Wherefore dost Thou forget us for ever?"—Macaulay's "History," Vol. 5th, Ch. XXV.

and wrote many satirical as well as philosophical poems, which, while establishing his literary fame, did little, if any, good to his distrusted co-religionists. His noble translation of Homer, perhaps superior to Dryden's previous translation of Virgil, probably diverted some British minds for a time from the narrowing yet absorbing influences of controversial or political works.

Amid the troubles of civil commotion and religious contest, both English poets gave their fellow-countrymen in an accessible, attractive form, the two greatest efforts of ancient Pagan literature.

John Gay took a different way to attract popular attention. He presented the public with his "Beggar's Opera," in which, with harmless intention, he yet described the dangerous prevalent system of highway robbery as interesting and romantic rather than mean and disgraceful. His hero, Captain Macheath, handsome, gay, and enterprising, was a mischievous example to many applauding British youths hearing his songs and admiring his uniform and dashing exploits, though transferred from lonely roads to the peaceful London stage. This curious play was most popular for a short time, being remarkable for its lively music, occasional wit, but frequent coarse language.¹

At the end of William III.'s reign, and during that of Queen Anne, there was rather less bitterness in religious dispute, and also in political differences. The lively, witty songs, "Lillibullero," and afterwards

¹ Arnold's "English Literature."

the "Vicar of Bray," both popular at different times, favoured William's triumph and described a time-serving clergyman always on the winning side both in politics and theology.¹ The strong effect of popular ballads on real history is confirmed rather than ridiculed by Macaulay's keen penetration; while "Lillibullero" is the lively, spirited expression of popular feeling, the "Vicar of Bray" glances shrewdly at English Church history from Charles II. to George I. inclusive.

In Queen Anne's reign the quarrels between "High" and "Low" divisions of the Anglican Church, though vehement and serious, caused no real cruelty or actual persecution. During the close of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries the Christian intellect in western Europe had either adopted some form of Protestantism or retained Catholicism, when a bold, philosophic spirit of religious scepticism, which in France became avowed atheism, began to assail both. The attacks of these sceptical and infidel writers were not in earnest exhortation, moving appeals to conscience, or eloquent praise or censure of particular doctrines. They appeared usually in cool, sarcastic ridicule, mostly addressed to learned rather than ignorant or enthusiastic minds. Among them the French philosopher, Voltaire (1694-1778), was the supreme genius. Though, like Bossuet, he wrote in French, yet his works, able, interesting, and popular, were soon trans-

¹ See Arnold's remarks on both songs.—"Manual of English Literature."

lated into English. They were much read, greatly admired, and greatly condemned.¹ His works were, on the whole, more influential among Catholics than Protestants. Yet, to the latter's disappointment, despite his attacks on Catholicism, as he showed no favour to any religious denomination, he did no good to Protestantism. His sarcastic powers were so great, plausible, and indiscriminating that they aroused doubts in religion among all Christian divisions alike.² But they never apparently much influenced the ignorant masses in any country.

Long after this great writer's death his works were praised or censured by most learned European minds. Yet they never overthrew any religion except in France, where their doctrines were eagerly applauded by the triumphant republicans.

Even in France their avowed influence at least was soon replaced by the restoration of Roman Catholicism, which they had chiefly attacked without favouring Protestant opponents.

In British literature Voltaire's cotemporary, the statesman Bolingbroke (1678-1751), despite his position and talents, had comparatively little influence.³ His religious views made slight impression, even on

¹ Macaulay's remarks on Voltaire, "Essay on Frederick the Great," also John Morley's "Life of Voltaire." The latter does not consider him the Atheist that Macaulay does, who compares him to Dryden's "Atheist" monkey in the "Hind and the Panther."

² Macaulay on Ranke's "History of the Popes."

³ Arnold's "Manual of English Literature," who states that Bolingbroke's scoffs at religion, very unlike the vast influence of Voltaire, "aroused only impatience and indignation."

British minds, whereas Voltaire's works spread nearly as much dismay among Christian theologians as if he had been the warrior-prophet of a new faith. Yet he was, in fact, the sneering, contemptuous foe of all religious systems, apparently, while praising and possessing some moral qualities, which all religious men wish to see in their respective denominations. The British public, about Voltaire's time, was addressed by three eminent historians—Gibbon (1737–1794), Hume (1711–1776), and Robertson (1721–1793).

Of these, Gibbon, by his grand work, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," became known to most learned European minds. His subject, so vast, so interesting and important, claimed attention not only in lands whose history it described, but in others where the glorious Roman name was never known. In the world's mysterious history it was fated that far more interest in the Roman Empire was felt, and far more knowledge of it acquired in countries long unknown or uncivilised than in those which had displayed either its political or intellectual glory. Britain, France, and Germany, where Gibbon's work was most studied, are yet comparatively seldom mentioned in his historic pages. His grand history ranges throughout southern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa.

Unlike most histories of his time, the "Decline and Fall" addressed all nations enjoying the inheritance of the ancient Roman Empire. It was, therefore, much read by foreigners, a recent edition being

prefaced and furnished with notes by M. Guizot, the French Prime Minister under King Louis Philippe.

This statesman, well versed in modern politics, bears valuable testimony to Gibbon's knowledge of human nature.¹ His history was soon generally studied throughout Britain. Its admirable account of Roman laws, institutions, and policy, as well as wars, conquests, and acquisitions, made it valuable to British readers in many professions.² The vast information it gives about the many countries described has rarely, if ever, been equalled in any single work, and he evidently enjoys his subject.

Except Macaulay and Buckle, few British historians show such interest in their undertakings. He admires the Romans almost as if he were one of them. Their martial exploits, civilising influence, amazing success and rule for centuries over the finest countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa, inspire him with an admiration which makes their history an intellectual pleasure as well as a mental improvement. In the glories of ancient Rome, Gibbon finds delight mingled with

¹ "His eye was never darkened by the mists which time gathers round the dead. He saw that man is ever the same, whether arrayed in the toga or in the dress of to-day, whether deliberating in the Senate of old or at the modern council board."—Guizot's preface to "Bohn's Edition of Gibbon." These words are specially valuable from the French Premier, who, often presiding at many Paris council boards, thus recognises and acknowledges the English historian's good sense.

² See Blackstone's and Warren's admissions about "the obligation of British laws to those of ancient Rome."—Blackstone's "Commentaries," Revised by Warren, p. 91-8.

instruction. Wherever Roman dominion spread, barbarism apparently yielded to its civilising power. The laws, customs, and obedience of millions inhabiting the richest countries of the known world, were regulated and claimed by this imperial race uniting in themselves nearly all the highest qualities of mankind. Their literature, however, is less noticed by Gibbon than might perhaps be expected.

Though a most attractive part of Roman history and most interesting to British readers, he says very little about it. Their martial triumphs, legal enactments and social improvements are his favourite subjects. He truly describes the Romans as successful when rulers as conquerors. Their vast conquests, obedient subjects, and lasting power, unlike the brief triumphs of most conquerors, usually displayed the permanent improvement of all countries under their control.

Among their various subjects, the Jews, apparently in religion, national habit, and mental thought, were the most uninfluenced by their Roman rulers.¹ They adhered to national customs, history, and religion with a proud preference and resolute determination, undiminished by political subjection. The triumph of Christianity, despite Jewish spiritual and Roman political opposition, was, perhaps, one of the grandest subjects ever presented to an historian, yet it is very briefly noticed in "The Decline and Fall."

Gibbon's chief fault, in British opinion generally, is his occasional sneering at Christianity. His sar-

¹ See Disraeli's "Life of Lord George Bentinck," Ch. XXIV.

casms arose apparently more from regret at the fall of Paganism, with some of its artistic and intellectual associations, caused by the enthusiasm of Christian preachers, than from any personal conviction about religion. His vexation at the Christian triumph over Paganism is so great that he even mentions Moham-medanism, Christianity's latest rival, with a respect, if not approval, seldom extended to it by Christian scholars or travellers of his time or before it.

Yet neither his nor Hume's distrust of Christianity, at their period or since, ever much weakened its hold on British minds. While the somewhat similar sneering of Voltaire irritated, alarmed, and perplexed many religious men throughout Europe, in Britain the words of Hume and Gibbon were spread among schools and colleges, sometimes with the sneering passages omitted or contradicted in notes and prefaces, without much fear of dangerous results. In fact, their sneers at Christianity, unlike Voltaire's brilliant attacks, are, perhaps, the least attractive parts of their great works.¹

Gibbon's talents are, however, well shown by the great learning, vast research, and shrewd judgment with which he delineates alike the strength and weakness of that grand empire, in some respects, indeed, an example, and in others a warning, to Christian successors. In most respects "The Decline and Fall" was worthy of one whose own nation resembled

¹ The German critic, Schlegel, aptly terms Gibbon's sneers at Christianity an "awkward attempt at witticism." See also Arnold's remarks.—"Manual of English Literature."

the ancient Roman, at least in combined powers of conquest and civilisation.

Unlike the devastating triumphs of most ancient nations, and of mediæval Mohammedans, British rule surely resembles the ancient Roman supremacy in accomplishing beneficial as well as triumphant results. The record of Roman historic glory was, therefore, an instructive as well as interesting subject, when presented in Gibbon's attractive style, to the study of his enterprising, intellectual nation.

CHAPTER IX

HUME—ROBERTSON—ADAM SMITH

HUME'S English History, from its clear, smooth style, careful research, and sound common sense, became for some time a standard authority. His work, dating from the Norman conquest till the death of William III., still commands attentive interest, though less trusted than formerly, owing to its numerous and more learned successors. The historical revelations, discoveries, and information made and acquired since its publication have naturally diminished its value. Recent eminent historians have rather censured it,¹ still the work, abridged and modified, has lately reappeared, proving its high estimation even yet in many British minds.

Like Gibbon, his sneers at Christianity offended many religious readers, while his defending Charles I. against the charges of the Republicans, displeased all admirers of Cromwell or of the Commonwealth.

Hume's deistical views, which, when his work first

¹ Macaulay's "Essay on History," also Buckle's "Civilisation."

appeared, shocked many Christians, have long ceased to arouse the same alarm or surprise owing to the increased variety of religious ideas, theories, and speculations since his time. His praising Charles I., and disliking Cromwell, seem at variance with his contempt for the English episcopal Church of which the king was the head, and by some thought the martyr. His views, therefore, rather perplexed some readers, as his dislike to Christianity was peculiarly opposed to Charles I.'s principles, while among his opponents, comprising many religious denominations, Hume's opinions might have had some sharers. His work is more like a series of short able biographies of successive English sovereigns than a complete history, as it says comparatively little about national progress in literature, science, or art. His remarks on Shakespeare are hardly worthy of an English historian. He evidently cannot appreciate the poet's unequalled knowledge of character.¹ His anti-Christian feelings seem not roused like those of Gibbon by admiration of Pagan art or genius, but more by a sensitive, humane abhorrence of religious bigotry too often shown by Christian theologians. He often uses the

¹ Hume blames Shakespeare for not making John of Gaunt include liberty among the blessings of his nation (Richard II.), when it may not have been so viewed by the proud, self-willed House of Lancaster. Shakespeare probably guessed the thoughts and feelings of English princes better than Hume, who viewed English freedom like a calm philosopher, not like an ambitious royal family, to whom it was, in all likelihood, an obstacle rather than a gratification or source of pride.

term *Zealots* with evident dislike and contempt, and seems unwilling, perhaps unable, to believe that even persecutors may be actuated by conscientious motives. His work expressing disbelief in Christian miracles was never as popular as his history, nor does it show the same consistent ability. His religious opinions, or rather insinuations, like those of Gibbon, made slight impression on the British public, considering the great popularity of both writers. They were each far more admired and trusted as political historians than in matters of religious belief.

The British intellect was evidently more influenced in religious thought by learned theologians. Among this class Bishop Butler (1692-1752) attracted great and fervent attention by his celebrated *Analogy* between natural and revealed religion, to this day admired and studied in colleges and universities, and by most learned divines of the Anglican Church.

The Scottish historian Robertson (1721-1793), cotemporary with Hume and Gibbon, wrote a *History of Scotland*, and of the Emperor Charles V. of Germany. The former work was considered an excellent authority; the latter was translated on the Continent, but its circulation forbidden in Spain for political reasons.¹

Unlike Hume and Gibbon, Robertson never attacks Christianity, yet his works were not as much read as theirs, being of less importance or interest to English readers than the interesting and comprehensive histories of England and Rome.

¹ Arnold's "Manual of English Literature."

About this time Defoe's popular work, "Robinson Crusoe," probably diverted many young Englishmen's attention from history to the combined amusement and information it furnished. This book, partly founded on fact, to some extent mingled the attraction of a fairy tale with the truth of a sailor's and traveller's diary. If its great popularity did not actually turn some youths into sailors, it probably inclined all who were so to take more interest in their profession by investing it with a love of discovery and natural history. In many ways this remarkable work was peculiarly welcome to an enterprising maritime people, especially at an adventurous age. It absorbed the practical attention, while delighting the fancy of many English youths, and, as far as a book could, probably inclined many to a life of travel or adventure, especially in a sea voyage of discovery. While books were multiplying under a peaceful government, Queen Anne's death and the successions of George I. and George II. caused two rebellions (1715-45). In their nature, purpose, and origin they might alike be called civil wars.

Both had the same object of restoring the exiled James, son of James II., to his ancestral throne. In both Scotland was the chief scene of action, each being mostly supported by the Highlanders, with slight assistance from English Jacobites.

The last rising in 1745 was the most interesting, perhaps, of the two, being headed by Prince Charles Edward, son of James III., or old Pretender, as he was severally termed by adherents and opponents.

Charles Edward, brave, handsome, and enterprising, seemed in many ways a loyalist's, if not a poet's, dream of what a prince should be ; while both the Georges were obeyed more from attachment to existing law and established religion than from personal esteem for either.

They steadily maintained the established prelacy of the English majority, while the Scottish majority, being Presbyterian and chiefly Lowlanders, had no wish to restore a banished family hitherto opposed to them, and who were chiefly supported by their dangerous and often hostile Highland neighbours.

In Ireland, despite its firm Catholicism, the banished Stuarts found no assistance in either 1715 or 1745.¹ The actual strife, therefore, was entirely between Scottish Highlanders, allied with a few English Tories and the British Prelatist and Presbyterian majorities.

Although these wars were extremely interesting, they for some time aroused very slight literary enthusiasm, talent, or notice. Many years after they furnished most attractive subjects for novelists and poets, as well as historians ; but during the contests cotemporary literature remained almost silent about them.

It is true that the Scottish peasant poet, Robert Burns (1759-1796), in his few political allusions, shows sympathy for "Bonny Prince Charlie," as Charles Edward was often called in ballads ; but his most

¹ See Macaulay's remarks on the indifference of Irish Catholics to both Pretenders.—"History of England."

popular poems are devoted to Scottish rural life. He occasionally recalls ancient wars between England and Scotland, while praising Robert Bruce and William Wallace, yet he never seeks to arouse the least enmity between the English and Scottish of his own times. His praises of Scottish heroes, therefore, were nearly as much admired in England as in Scotland. His description of Scottish peasant life in his "Cotter's Saturday Night," had the useful effect of pleasing both rich and poor. He thereby greatly aided to increase or preserve that sympathetic feeling between the Scottish upper and lower classes which has always prevailed, and to which Scotland, doubtless, owes much of its steady, social contentment.

Burns's Jacobite sympathies, like Scott's, showed no bitterness against the established Government. In fact, the combined sense, justice, and humanity of both these Scottish writers about their fellow-countrymen are a marked contrast to the vehement, unreasoning bitterness of most writers on Ireland's history. It seems from Walter Scott's works that a few pathetic Jacobite ballads were known throughout North Britain, but for years they attracted little public attention.¹ Scott's subsequent novels, describing the Jacobite wars, therefore, took the London public almost by surprise.

The established Government, supported by British wealth, power, and intellect, hardly invited the aid of literature; while, till Scott's works appeared, very

¹ See Arnold's remarks on the first Jacobite songs.—"Manual of English Literature."

little interest was felt or, at least, shown about the unfortunate Jacobites throughout England. This almost callous indifference towards noble opponents in a highly civilised Christian land requires perhaps more attention than it has received. It was caused probably by English detestation of James II., whose odious tyranny it was generally feared the triumph of either his son or grandson would restore.

Yet in the legalised cruelty of the Duke of Cumberland, representing George II., to helpless Jacobites after their last defeat at Culloden, there seemed little, if any, diminution of English severity to alleged traitors since the wars of the Roses. During that long interval, however, literary efforts, progress, and improvement were great indeed. Divines, philosophers, poets, and historians, had taught, enlightened, and interested a comparatively free and Christian nation for centuries. The time had come, therefore, which, in legal act and public opinion, should have proved England's Christian principles under auspices so favourable, and after so long a time for their practical development. Yet the laws against treason, which, in civil war, must be often a matter of opinion, were not only as cruel, but as cruelly enforced in the 18th century as after the battles of Tewkesbury and Bosworth in the 15th.¹ These cruelties, though nominally inflicted by "Butcher" Cumberland, as his foes called him, aroused little public regret or indig-

¹ See Macaulay's remarks on the York and Lancaster wars, "History of England," Vol. 1st, and on the slight amount of national suffering they caused.

nation.¹ The Duke, unlike Richard III. or Henry VIII., neither tempted nor executed any one to accomplish private purposes or gratify personal resentment. He merely enforced, though apparently without any humane reluctance, those laws, which had long existed, with the consent of the community.

Thus, when in a Christian, civilised land, some of its noblest inhabitants were deliberately executed as "rebels" or "traitors" by a government established through revolution, public opinion uttered no remonstrance, and showed neither pity, disgust, nor even much interest.

The woes of imaginary individuals described by Richardson (1689-1761), Fielding (1707-1754), and other novelists of the time, absorbed English literary attention, arousing a compassion far more deserved by real political victims of the period than by sentimental creations of the fancy. But party prejudice, founded on historical recollection and political alarm, apparently extinguished British sympathy, diverting it from the legalised executions of noble fellow-countrymen to the sufferings or troubles of imaginary persons.

Between the dates of these Jacobite revolts there appeared a most useful, thoroughly practical Scottish writer, Adam Smith (1723-1790). Though he took no part in politics, his great treatise on the "Wealth of Nations" claimed the attention of all practical

¹ See Cassell's "Illustrated English History," also Scott's remarks in "Waverley," "Rob Roy," and "Redgauntlet" on the general indifference towards Jacobite prisoners in England, which indicated approval of their relentless treatment.

British statesmen,¹ while the work of Blackstone (1723-1780) on English law, and the religious works of Paley (1743-1805), prove how much the British intellect was now addressed, instructed, and improved. Yet not till long after these valuable and civilising works were British laws about treason and prison treatment generally more humane than in previous centuries.

The spirit of practical humanity observable in some English writers, even before this time, apparently influenced legislation with surprising slowness, considering the long nominal prevalence of Christianity in Great Britain. Thus the sentiments of many enlightened men about the duties of government, Christian principle, and legal justice, seem strangely inconsistent with the political laws under which they lived and which long survived them. These able, yet politically powerless, writers laboured in different ways more for posterity than for their own time.

Blackstone, by his clear, careful examination of English laws, though written, perhaps unavoidably, in a dry, dull style, prepared the way for their future improvement by their industrious explanation,² while Archdeacon Paley, writing in an easier style than his predecessor, Bishop Butler, proved himself one of the most useful and enlightened members of his Church.³

¹ See Buckle's praise of this work and belief in its permanent value.—"History of Civilisation," Vol. 1st.

² Macaulay's remarks on Blackstone.—"Essay on Mackintosh," p. 126.

³ Lecky's remarks on the value of Paley's works.—"History of England in the 18th Century," Vol. 5th.

During many years the Established Church was peculiarly disliked both by Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters, partly owing to its political supremacy. Paley, by his calm, reasonable, tolerant views, high character, and great ability, was well suited to raise it, to some extent at least, in the estimation of other denominations. His object, unlike many of the first literary Prelatists, was to oppose atheism, the common enemy, rather than other Christian divisions.

This difference in theological anxiety was a sign of changed times in the British religious world. No other denomination in Paley's time menaced the political supremacy of his own. But atheism since the days of Voltaire, whose popular powerful works spread rapidly throughout Europe, caused great alarm to most religious minds.

Atheism, though never avowed by either Hume or Gibbon, had probably derived some slight encouragement from their ideas or insinuations. Paley's works were, therefore, eminently useful in vindicating Christianity with no bitterness to opponents, but by calmly addressing readers in its favour without sarcasm, indignation, or even enthusiasm. His chief works, "Evidences of Christianity," "Natural Theology," and "Horæ Paulinæ," were addressed more to deists, sceptics, or atheists, than to any Christian sect.

In Paley's time Christian controversialists, Catholic or Protestant, believing themselves well armed against each other with argumentative weapons, were alike astonished by the boldness of avowed atheism appearing in their midst. It addressed the highest intellects

in Christian lands by doubting historical Christianity, while praising its moral precepts.¹

To resist such attacks Paley was well suited at least among Englishmen, though perhaps on the Continent a more eloquent, fervent writer like Bossuet would have had more effect. Paley's style was essentially English, cool, reasoning, clear and explicit.² Though a most sincere Christian, he kept his feelings so well under control that all opponents could read his works without irritation or desire to sneer. Hence he proved, perhaps, as useful a champion as Christianity, especially its Anglican section, could have in England at a time of religious scepticism and a rather invidious ecclesiastical supremacy.

¹ Macaulay's Essay on "Ranke's History."

² See Lecky's praise of Paley's works.—"England in the 18th Century," Vol. 5th.

CHAPTER X

DOCTOR JOHNSON

WHILE Adam Smith, Blackstone, and Paley wrote chiefly for British statesmen, lawyers, and theologians, the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), living mostly in London, addressed English people generally, like Addison, through literary magazines, as well as separate works. His "Lounger" and "Rambler," however, never had *The Spectator's* previous popularity. His best and most lasting works, beside his Dictionary, are his "Lives of the Poets," and the short poems, "London," and "Vanity of Human Wishes." His edition of "Shakespeare," though valuable when published and made a college prize-book, has been completely surpassed in value by recent English and German versions. His "Preface to Shakespeare," once much admired, defends the poet from ignorant or frivolous attacks. He truly remarks that "the stream of time passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare." This opinion literary history has proved correct ever since Johnson's day.

For many years Shakespeare has needed no

defender. His merits have been praised with increased enthusiasm by both English and German commentators, while Johnson's "notes" have lost nearly all interest and are of unequal merit. His opinion, for instance, of the old Danish statesman, Polonius, in "Hamlet," once wise but "sinking into dotage," is admired even by Johnson's rather rigid critic, Macaulay, but many of his other remarks, like calling the brave, shrewd Hotspur merely a courageous, quarrelsome soldier, show that he had not studied Shakespeare's characters with the attention they have received since his time.

As a rule, and owing probably to political history, readers of Shakespeare were seldom found among the admirers of Milton for a long period. These two greatest of English poets were, for some years, almost exclusively appreciated by opposing political parties. The gay, lively, often intemperate Royalists or Cavaliers and London playgoers were Shakespeare's chief students, while Milton's poetry alone extorted reluctant praise from loyal Prelatists, who viewed his prose works and political opinions with utter detestation.

It was among Dr. Johnson's literary efforts to examine and review the masterpieces of both ; but though his edition of "Shakespeare" and "Life of Milton" were admired and trusted for a time, posterity has, in many respects, disapproved of them. Neither is often referred to or consulted of late years by readers of Shakespeare and Milton. Yet his "Lives of the Poets," save perhaps when politics are men-

tioned, prove more of Johnson's sense and wisdom than any of his works, except, indeed, his amusing and instructive conversations, recalled in his "Life" by his faithful admirer, Boswell.

This excellent biography bequeathed much of Johnson's practical wisdom, like a valuable legacy, to the British nation, and was highly praised by learned literary men.¹ Johnson, though resembling Addison in his style of addressing the British public at large, and earnestly wishing to improve all whom he could influence, was yet a man of far bolder nature. He thoroughly enjoyed society, which Addison disliked and avoided. He drew around him in London a delightful circle of literary, artistic, and thoughtful men.

Among these, though rather imperiously, he diffused and acquired immense information on various subjects, yet always with a moral, practical purpose. His influence over the English intellect was great, useful, and permanent. Like Addison and Paley, he was an earnest Christian, but though belonging to the Established Church, he expresses rather more religious than political toleration. He shows little prejudice against any religious denomination, but his horror of revolution was so excessive that he sometimes disparaged those who possessed more liberal views than his own.

His favourite saying that patriotism was the last resource of a scoundrel, though verified by some historical instances, from its obvious exaggeration,

¹ See Macaulay's Essay on this work.

showed him to be hardly reliable as a political authority. But even his prejudices, like his sometimes saying, even to friends, "Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig," &c., usually aroused friendly argument, and seldom real anger, between him and opponents. The Jacobite revolts in his lifetime evidently perplexed his generous yet shrewd and sensible mind.¹ While pitying the defeated party, he well knew that the intellect, wealth, and real interests of Britain favoured the existing government. He earnestly pleaded in behalf of Jacobite prisoners, but without success.

He apparently had little if any political influence. His sound sense and generosity doubtless made great impression on British minds, and prepared them, perhaps, for the yet more useful and extensive influence of Walter Scott. But it was clearly beyond Johnson's power or that of any literary man of his time to diminish political severity, when sanctioned by approved or existing legislation. Johnson, whose courage, humanity, and wisdom made him in the literary world rather like the national John Bull in the political, dreaded the republicanism arising in France.²

He shrewdly perceived that many leading French

¹ Boswell's "Life of Johnson," where, despite the latter's Tory feelings, he owned that he could not "hold up his hand" for Charles Edward, in whose behalf some British Tories were risking life and fortune at the time.

² Arnold's remarks on Johnson's moral influence in opposing French revolutionary ideas in England.—"Manual of English Literature," p. 293.

republicans, while praising Voltaire, had none of the humane, enlightened spirit which made that eminent man's attacks on religion so perplexing to some devout believers.¹ Few Englishmen, probably, except the Jacobites, were more devoted to monarchy than Dr. Johnson. He doubtless did good service to it in the London literary world, but it fell to the lot of his illustrious Irish friend, Edmund Burke, who survived him, to attack French republicanism with many of Johnson's sentiments, perhaps, in his mind, but expressed with his own peculiar, fervent eloquence.

The religious as well as political French revolution at the end of the 18th century was, perhaps, the most complete revolt, in every sense, that is recorded in history. It avowedly, even enthusiastically, abolished all public worship with the monarchy, under severe penalties. Both "God and the King," often associated together by eager monarchists as alike entitled to obedience, were dethroned as far as human energy could do so.

The revolution seemed more like the realised fantastic dream of a nervous monarchist than a practical change effected by rational men. Atheistical ideas, perhaps rather like those of the old Greek and Roman Aristodemus and Lucretius, now appeared in French literature, public speeches, legal acts, and theatrical performances.² Voltaire's name was often

¹ See Macaulay's remark on Voltaire's sneers at Christianity, while advocating many of its moral principles.—Essay on "Ranke's History."

² Macaulay's description of Paris during the Revolution—Essay

invoked as the mental founder, patron, and teacher of the new French ideas, but his humane enlightenment was gone, being replaced by a ferocious spirit of religious and political persecution, fatal to real liberty of thought or conscience.

Accordingly, Burke's impassioned attack on the French republic, which he denounced with vehement eloquence, seemed justified by the atrocities it committed. This essay was probably his most influential work, considering its joyous reception by many alarmed Continental governments. It certainly procured for its gifted author the thanks and compliments of European monarchies.¹ The fame of this essay far exceeded, at least in foreign circulation, his many eloquent speeches, addressed chiefly to the British public.

His vehement attack on the French revolution, without actually suggesting restoration of monarchy, yet described the republic as if incapable of amendment. At this time in Britain, despite much political discontent, there was little liking for republicanism, at least in any definite form, though the French example was much dreaded by some alarmed monarchists. But the new French principles were, on the whole, less popular or less dreaded apparently in Britain than in many Continental kingdoms.

The successful revolt of the United States against Britain was accomplished by Americans alone, without

on "Ranke's History"; also Carlyle's "History of the French Revolution."

¹ Preface to Burke's Essay on "The French Revolution."

foreign aid. After the establishment of the American republic, therefore, the monarchy in Britain seemed as popular as before. Its signal defeat in this one important instance aroused no other rebellion throughout its vast dominion, except in Ireland, where, however, the subsequent French revolution found many admirers; while Burke's powerful reproaches justified, indeed, to some extent by the fanatical violence of the French republicans, aided the monarchical cause on the Continent as well as in Britain.

In Ireland, Burke, except among some Protestant fellow-countrymen and a few enlightened Catholics, had no influence. He was much less generally trusted in Ireland than in Britain. In the latter his eloquence of speech and writing was greatly admired, partly owing to its comparative rarity. In Ireland where similar eloquence is far more common, though usually devoted to opposite politics, his brilliant language had evidently little effect. Thus, while this able Protestant Irishman, identifying himself with British interests in London, charmed and convinced British readers and hearers, other eloquent Irishmen, Tone, the Emmets, &c., far more popular in Ireland, were about this time often in France studying its revolutionary changes with an admiration producing the natural result of attempted imitation.

Tone's strange diary, written in Paris, shows his admiration for the French republic, of which he became the soldier and subject. Without avowing Atheism, he expresses intense hatred to Roman Catholicism, yet shows no preference for any other

religion. He vehemently abuses the Papacy, then specially exposed to republican hatred abroad, while Burke defended it, at least against political foes, with impassioned eloquence. These two able Irishmen occupied extraordinary relative positions. Tone, trusted and admired by the Irish Catholic majority, in his private journal not published till after his death, abuses the Head of their Church with a threatening anger, almost indicating that he would not be safe in his power.¹ Burke, without any influence over the Irish Catholic masses, yet defended the Papacy, and praised the Pope personally in public essays and speeches addressed to all educated Europe.² But neither Tone nor any Irish revolutionist appealed much to literary influence, except through newspapers in eloquent speeches or stirring proclamations.

In England, about this time, Thomas Paine was one of the ablest writers who, warmly praising the French republic, vigorously attacked Christianity. Though an energetic, forcible, and apparently sincere writer, his works, "The Age of Reason" (written in

¹ Tone's "Memoirs," where he calls the Pope "Lucifer," and ominously hopes that his political overthrow and banishment will "not be the last of his sorrows." He also declares that for centuries the Pope, meaning the Papacy, has been "fleecing" Europe.

² Selections from Burke's writings, where he calls the Pope a venerable Pontiff, displaying amid his troubles "piety and magnanimity." In a very opposite spirit to Tone denouncing the Papacy as "fleecing" Europe, Burke declares that the possessions held by the "cherishing arms" of the Papacy for hundreds of years, were torn from them by the French republicans.—P. 369-70.

1794) and the "Rights of Man" (1792), despite their attractive titles, never convinced the British masses, nor aroused either enthusiasm or even much interest. Paine's style, different, indeed, from Voltaire's polished elegance, was blunt, if not coarse; easily understood, but not very attractive either to the learned or the ignorant. His influence in Britain, though, perhaps, increased by the brief triumph of his opinions in France, was neither extensive nor lasting. So many popular British writers before and during his time were religious men that Paine's attack on Christianity was ably refuted, and never met with general favour.

Dr. Johnson's practical sense, aided by the brilliant, eloquent Burke, and also by the simple sweetness of their friend, Oliver Goldsmith, shown specially in his "Vicar of Wakefield," all opposed Paine's ideas, though in different ways. The latter, with more boldness than either Hume or Gibbon, but with less ability than either, openly disavowed Christianity. But the British intellect generally opposed his views. The utter failure of the French republic in yielding to Napoleon's military rule, after many of its chief leaders were executed by each other, doubtless much inclined the British public to distrust its English admirers, among whom Paine was conspicuous.

Burke's eloquent, anti-republican writings became very popular in England: perhaps more so in his lifetime and soon after than in later times, when men's minds, no longer alarmed at the excesses of the French republicans, perceived some exaggeration, mingled with valuable truth, in Burke's censure of

them. While he chiefly addressed statesmen, legislators, and politicians, his cotemporary, Goldsmith, wrote both for general readers and also for the London stage. His best works, "The Vicar of Wakefield" and the comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer," obtained a popularity they, to some extent, still retain. The former, describing the virtues and misfortunes of an Anglican clergyman, was most acceptable among that denomination.

Without offending any Christian sect, it represented a member of the Established Church in such an amiable, interesting light, that it aroused admiration among readers of all religious persuasions. The comedy, by mingling real wit, dramatic effect, and lively humour, with a moral purpose, was a practical benefit to the English stage. The most particular or rigid of the public could enjoy it, and thus associate, as in some of Shakespeare's plays, pure moral precept with the attraction of dramatic art.

While Goldsmith amused and instructed the public by his quaint simplicity and original talent, the celebrated actor, David Garrick, also a friend of Dr. Johnson, Burke, and Goldsmith, represented with brilliant success many of Shakespeare's grandest creations. He was accordingly painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, standing between Tragedy and Comedy, smiling at the former, but evidently preferring the latter. Indeed, both were almost alike to his genius, so that the picture was a truthful compliment. Shakespeare's plays were his special favourites, and probably displayed his talents more than any others.

The ennobling and civilising influence of the unrivalled poet was, perhaps, more apparent than ever before during this eventful period of England's intellectual history. While the neighbouring Continent was excited or distracted by infidel revolution, while most European countries, dreading its approach, began to associate real liberty with reckless license, cruelty, and social disorder, Britain, from this time, became evidently more just, enlightened, tolerant, and merciful. Its combined moral and intellectual progress was sure, steady, and uninterrupted. British Christian divisions gradually began to view each other, at least, comparatively without bitterness. Religious arguments became more learned, calm, and sincere, without being dangerous to political interests. Legal improvements also began to solicit public attention, while literary influence generally was more and more devoted to raise the British name intellectually, morally, and politically, among the nations of the world.

CHAPTER XI

SIR WALTER SCOTT AND HIS COTEMPORARIES

NAPOLEON'S final defeat early in the last century by allied European forces, yet chiefly by English valour and generalship, raised England higher than ever intellectually and politically in European estimation. All countries except France were more or less friendly to British influence.

Spanish enmity and Papal decrees were no longer directed against Protestant England. On the contrary, Napoleon's conduct towards Spain and the Pope alienated both. Instead of retaining historical enmity, the Papacy and the Spanish nation rejoiced at England's triumph over France, represented, at least, by Napoleon's aggressive empire.

When peace was re-established in Europe after the battle of Waterloo, Britain, though Protestant, was, for the first time in history, as friendly with the Catholic as with the Protestant Powers of Europe. This enviable position increased the influence of British literature at home and abroad.

Freed from fear of foreign hostility and invasion, the British intellect was better able now, perhaps,

than ever, to devote itself to social and legal improvements, as well as to political supremacy. Among its highest representatives, Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) was in literature the most remarkable and practically useful.

A Scotchman, yet a great lover of England, Scott knew that even after the Waterloo triumph there still lingered a sense of injury among descendants of Scottish Jacobites who, some sixty years before, had lost or risked life and property in behalf of the deposed Stuarts.

Scott's love for Scotland equalled, perhaps excelled, his love for England, yet his attachment to both was happily united in sincere, practical patriotism. He knew that the Union of England and Scotland in 1700 was by no means as complete as the name indicated. The almost implacable and useless severity of the Government towards Scottish Jacobites had sunk deep into many noble and dejected minds. Scott also saw that even in London society, despite its many civilising influences, there were still strong prejudices, not only against the Jacobite cause, but against all who had borne arms in its vindication. His first novel, "Waverley," addressed the British nation generally in the earnest desire of representing the Jacobites as noble and interesting, without associating their many noble qualities or motives with any preference for their cause. In "Waverley" he describes the 1745 revolt; in "Rob Roy" he alludes to its predecessor in 1715, while in "Old Mortality" he describes with a fairness previously unknown the

contending Scottish Prelatists and Presbyterians in Charles II.'s reign.

In "Ivanhoe" he recalls English history in Richard I.'s reign, including its brilliant tournaments, and also its religious bigotry against the Jews. In the "Talisman" during the same reign he describes the Crusades in Syria, investing that extraordinary warfare with most romantic interest. Yet about the Crusades and the persecution of Jews, Scott was less practically useful, both these inspirations of religious intolerance having long ceased to animate Christian minds. The rest of his novels, except "The Monastery," "The Abbot," "Kenilworth," and "Woodstock," which recall Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, Cromwell, and Charles II., are chiefly founded on local Scottish tales. None of his historical novels could have such effect on British history as those recalling the comparatively recent Jacobite wars, or the religious contests in Scotland.

Their chief incidents, events, and personages, perhaps seldom mentioned in London, still retained historic interest in Scotland. Thus Scott's healing influence, so pleasing, wise, and beneficent, greatly aided to confirm the real as well as the nominal union of Great Britain. His works on witchcraft, chivalry, and Scottish history, were far less attractive and popular than his admirable novels. His three best poems, "Marmion," "Lady of the Lake," and "Lay of the Last Minstrel," though delightful to most readers, had no political bearing or intention. But his historical novels were indeed the literary exploits of a real

patriot, devoting his noblest efforts to efface all hereditary enmity remaining among fellow-countrymen.

His eminent fellow-poet, Lord Byron (1788-1824), despite the immense popularity of his works, neither had, nor tried to have, much influence on political history. Except in his ardent sympathy for the Greeks, revolting against the Turkish yoke, he seldom took interest in practical politics, while neither legislation nor theology apparently engaged his thoughts or talents.

The admiration aroused by his poetry was so great in Britain that even the few verses he devoted to the Greek cause evidently inclined the British public in its favour. In this advocacy he was apparently more actuated by love of ancient Greek literature and scenery than by political interest in the revolt. Like most intelligent Europeans, he naturally sympathised with a nation so oppressed as the Greeks by the degrading rule of the Turks, yet Byron seems to have shown little practical interest in the future government of Greece, and his death occurred before its final liberation.

Except in his noble enthusiasm for the Greeks, Byron's poetical influence in Britain was more sensual, enervating, and morbidly exciting than improving. His poems were more addressed to the indolent, the fanciful, and the voluptuous, than to the devout, the thoughtful, or intellectual, among his fellow-countrymen.¹

¹ Macaulay shrewdly remarks that one idea to be learned from

While Scott and Byron enlightened and fascinated the British literary world, their gifted Irish fellow-poet, Thomas Moore (1780-1852), aroused or confirmed in his Irish melodies especially, the historical enmity of his nation to England. Of all his works none obtained the enduring popularity of these beautiful verses. They were mostly adapted to ancient Irish music, and their whole spirit recalls the anti-English feelings of the former bards of Ireland, who probably seldom expressed hatred to England in the English language. In Elizabeth's reign Edmund Spenser¹ expressed indignation against those national minstrels who, with persistent enthusiasm, preserved through generations Irish enmity to all invaders from the Danes to the English inclusive.

This animosity, being finally sanctioned and increased by religious differences, never left the Irish mind, and early in the last century it reappeared in beautiful verses and expressed in polished English, instead of its more suitable medium of the ancient Irish language. Yet Moore had no personal dislike to the English whatever. He lived much in England, and was most friendly with many distinguished Englishmen.

The effect of his popular *Melodies*, even more than his life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and *History of Ireland*, was to maintain, if not increase, Irish dislike

Byron's poetry is "to hate your neighbour and to love your neighbour's wife."—"Essay on Byron."

¹ "View of Ireland" and Macaulay's remarks on it.—"History of England."

to British rule. He often mentions the Saxons, meaning the English and the Danes, as if equally enemies to Ireland. He never thought, perhaps, considering his many English friends, how dangerously his ardent verses might perpetuate that Irish historical enmity to England which all wise British statesmen, or patriotic British subjects, have deeply deplored. Neither he nor his numerous British admirers probably thought what effect the spirit of his Melodies would have among an excitable people, less changed, perhaps, than any in Europe by the progress or lessons of time.

British lovers of poetry, therefore, admired these Irish melodies as merely beautiful poems. Moore himself, considering his liking for England, probably never contemplated their increasing or encouraging Irish hatred to it.¹ In reality they proved stirring, morose incentives to Irish discontent, if not revolt, and also to sectarian animosity in Ireland; for though Moore avoids naming its Christian divisions, yet British rule is so identified by Irish millions with Protestantism, that it would be difficult to denounce the one without involving the other in the same historical condemnation.

While the sentimental British public, therefore, enjoyed beautiful poetic verses about the silence of Tara's harp, Robert Emmet's execution, and the unrivalled sweetness of revenge on tyrants, they evidently forgot in thoughtless or frivolous pleasure

¹ See Alison's allusions to Moore's singing these melodies to delighted British audiences.—"History of Europe."

the practical application of these lines. In London and Edinburgh these sentiments were viewed as delightful proofs of poetic talent. In Dublin the majority thought them true political guides and reminders preserving and glorifying national hatred to British authority.

Thus during public meetings, when anti-English sentiments were uttered, the exciting beauty of Moore's verses soon supplanted all more coarse or cautious poetic ballads to the same effect. In fact, Moore's melodies to this day possess a peculiar and dangerous charm for Irish minds. They are in Ireland at once poetical, historical, and practical.

They reveal, in the beautiful eloquent language most Irishmen command or appreciate, that enmity to Britain which, though often concealed, has been always more or less popular. Without arousing new ideas or desires among the Irish, they revive, confirm, and, as far as poetic beauty can, adorn, if not sanctify, that idea of national injury which has been the unfortunate inheritance of Irishmen for centuries.

Moore probably thought that in recalling traditional Irish wars for freedom, and condemning Danish and Saxon or English invaders, he was giving a poetic sketch of Irish history which would no more increase modern Irish hatred to England than Scott's historical novels or ballads had aroused enmity to it. But Scott, in all historical allusions, seems never to overlook their possible effect upon his own time. In all historical sketches, events, and characters, he most carefully avoids any irritating remark, hint, or insinua-

tion. He usually introduces specimens of opposite characters among all religious and political divisions. The moral value of this literary principle can hardly, perhaps, be exaggerated. He recognises, with a combined wisdom, charity, and knowledge of human nature, seldom equalled in literary history, how often the best and wisest men are opposed in religious and political opinions. He perceived the common and dangerous error of historians in pronouncing unscrupulous praise or censure during times of war or controversy.

Scott, though a firm, decided politician, is always cautious, forbearing, and considerate, when describing either the feelings or motives of his own partisans or opponents. Moore, in political allusions to Ireland, usually involved with the religious element, has no idea of fairness whatever. To him, like most other Irish writers and speakers, one party is entirely, nobly, and exclusively right, and all others basely, cruelly, and utterly wrong. "On our side is Virtue and Erin ; on theirs is the Saxon and Guilt," so he wrote, and the one-sided, utterly unjust sentiment of these lines and others of a like tendency have naturally produced in Ireland the very reverse of Scott's patriotic appeals to the British mind of his time. Indeed, so exciting, revolutionary, and eloquent are some of Moore's verses about Ireland, that readers might imagine him an oppressed exile instead of a really social, even luxurious man, living much in England from choice, a loyal subject to the British Crown, and a special favourite in English society.

Among the friends and cotemporary poets of Scott, Byron, and Moore, William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was one of the most pleasing and popular. While sympathising with the French republicans, before their excesses lowered them in English estimation,¹ he took no active part in foreign or home politics. He was essentially an English rural poet, gifted with deep, religious feelings, which, expressed in fervent poetry, made his works very attractive to thoughtful minds. He had, perhaps, more secret influence over people than many addressing them in a more public manner. He mingled the love of country with religious thought, without indulging in theological speculation. By so writing he probably inspired devout feelings, through associating them with the beauties of external nature. In religious belief, personal habits, and literary efforts, he alike resembled Shakespeare's account of one who, "Exempt from public haunt, Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

A contrast to this peaceful poet appears in his historical cotemporary, Sir Archibald Alison. In his rather voluminous *European Histories*, and some biographies, he shows similar political views to those of Walter Scott. Unlike most modern historians, Alison prefers arousing and praising the love of martial exploits to dwelling complacently on the blessings of peace, or the mental, artistic progress which usually attends it. His short notices of British

¹ Arnold's "Manual of Literature."

literature apparently neither interest nor please him like describing Marlborough's or Wellington's triumphs in his lives of those famous generals. In his two European histories, the French republics of the last century and of 1848, being replaced by the empires of Napoleon I. and Napoleon III., gratify him more than had he to describe the triumphs of republicanism.

Resembling Alison in politics, his fellow-Scotchman, Professor Aytoun, in the spirit of Scott, though with inferior genius, poetically describes the fate of Scottish royalist heroes, the executed Montrose, and the victorious Dundee.

Party spirit, however, in Scotland, unlike Ireland, practically disappeared during the last century. Aytoun describes Montrose as a hero, while the "grim Geneva ministers," whom he compares to birds of prey, sanction the execution of the gallant captive. Yet this account, admired and recited as a pleasing poem, never aroused anger or protest among Presbyterians of the present day, to whose religion Montrose was, as even Scott admits, a relentless foe.¹

The influences of Alison and Aytoun being devoted to the Tory or cavalier party, gratified partisans without apparently irritating opponents. Among his short literary notices, Alison mentions his friend, Sir Edward Bulwer, afterwards Lord Lytton, with peculiar satisfaction. This remarkable man, at once novelist, essayist, and play-writer, poet and statesman, when young, wrote some rather democratic, if not revolutionary novels. His "Paul Clifford," a dashing

¹ "Legend of Montrose."

young highwayman, is as interesting as Gay's "Captain Macheath."

This book, besides condemning capital punishment, expresses some revolutionary ideas. In a note, therefore, to a late edition, the reader is reminded that certain sentiments uttered by the attractive hero are not those of the author. Bulwer Lytton's conversion, in later days, to Conservatism, does not much appear in his novels, which are more social, historical, and sentimental than political. His essays on "England and the English," "The Student," &c., though not showing the brilliancy of his earlier works, were intended, though in moderate language, to strengthen the Conservative spirit in Britain, which was opposed by most of the rising literary men of his time.

Bulwer's political essays seem composed by a great mind, rather divided between love of fiction and an increasing liking for politics. These tastes he combined in a singular manner throughout a remarkable life. While a Cabinet Minister he wrote novels, as if they were a pleasant relief from office duties, but none show any political bitterness. His great command of language was, with advancing age, gradually diverted from sentimental delineations of heroes and heroines, or graphic descriptions of southern countries, like his "Last Days of Pompeii," to practical business and political questions.

This great change in mental devotion, so rarely found in the same man, Bulwer Lytton showed in a remarkable degree. Yet his works, except some of the early ones, are more suited to classical scholars,

men of the world, or philosophical students, than to general readers. The literary influence of his later years highly favoured the Conservatives, who, in his lifetime, were surpassed in literary genius, thought and activity by Liberal opponents. Bulwer began literary life almost an admirer of young revolutionists. Both the historical Italian Rienzi, whom he eloquently describes in fiction and the imaginary bandit Paul Clifford, alike denounce tyranny in the name of popular liberty.

Yet Bulwer ended his literary career when a shrewd, cautious Tory statesman, opposed by many ardent young Liberals, who had enjoyed his delightful novels, some of which inspired the ideas he had abandoned. Thus his literary and political influence were somewhat opposed to each other, but his real services to the Conservatives, and his complete adhesion to Benjamin Disraeli's policy, under whom he took office, completely enlisted him among that party. The Liberals, aided by a majority of literary champions, doubtless regretted Bulwer Lytton's exchanging the Liberal ideas of his youth for the Conservative opinions of his mature age.

Among the chief literary Liberals of his time, the historian, Henry Hallam (1777-1859), occupied a distinguished place. He was no politician, but his three works on the "Middle Ages," "English Constitutional History," and "Literary History of Europe," from their vast learning, common sense, and extreme fairness, won the confidence of most thoughtful British readers.

Hallam's contempt for the Jacobite party is as coolly expressed as if he were discussing some literary subject. He seems never irritated by political men or political opinions. Unlike Macaulay, he has no historical favourites. He is, indeed, seldom, if ever, enthusiastic upon any subject. His works will probably be always far more consulted, trusted, and believed than enjoyed or admired.

The influence of his calm writings decidedly supported the Liberals, though without encouraging the least revolutionary spirit. Yet, in political views, as in literary taste, this able writer was more appreciated by a few judicious minds than by a majority of readers. Neither in literary nor political history can Hallam make his style interesting. His object in both is to write as fairly and learnedly as possible, and to impart the results of his great research, historic knowledge, and impartial judgment to his readers. But unfortunately, alike for historic truth and literary taste, Hallam's style is always dry, if not dull, even on most attractive subjects.

While his valuable works will probably be always trusted by a learned few, they are not likely to become popular. His political views have, perhaps, less influence than his literary opinions. In this peaceful domain of human thought, especially in England, he may be consulted by many readers, whose minds, undisturbed by religious or political disputes, will find welcome instruction in a writer of such good taste, sound learning, and calm judgment. But in political history, save for undeniable facts in British

legislation, Hallam's cool impartiality is probably less likely to please or influence than the industrious energy and brilliant eloquence of his historical successors, Green, Buckle, and Lord Macaulay.

While many Protestants have written on British history, Dr. John Lingard (1771-1851) is, perhaps, the chief English Roman Catholic historian. His "History of England," though naturally in favour of his own persuasion, is written with great moderation. His sincere Catholicism never makes him forget he is an Englishman. Unlike some Irish Catholic historians, he never sympathises with England's foes. Lingard's feelings, views, and sentiments, were, and still are, evidently shared by many English co-religionists, who, though sincerely Catholic, have always preserved their attachment to the English monarchy.

CHAPTER XII

LORD MACAULAY

MACAULAY (1800-1859), inspired by political views more like those of Addison, if not Milton, than of Hume or Walter Scott, wrote "Essays," "Miscellaneous Works," and finally his "History of England," including Scotland and Ireland, during the reigns of James II. and William III. In this work he gives a short yet most instructive sketch of previous British history from the Norman conquest. In his Essays he often regrets the usually dull style of historical narration, declaring that, if made interesting, it would be as attractive as a sensational novel.

Among the learned writers of the last century, none perhaps equal Macaulay in making almost every subject interesting, even to people without literary taste. Like his cotemporary novelist, Mr. Charles Dickens, he had the rare delightful art of attracting the fancy as well as attention of readers. His talents first appeared in the Essays, which comprise a large variety of subjects. The lives of eminent men, with literary and historical reviews of important events and books, he enriched with the learning, intelligence,

and information due alike to his peculiar genius and to the vast assistance derivable from the general enlightenment of the last century.

Macaulay, in many respects, displays the spirit of his inquiring, enterprising age. Though a Scotchman, much preferring Lowland Whigs to Highland Tories, he shows none of that partiality to Scotland so general among his nation. He is thoroughly English in ideas, feelings, sympathies, and tastes. He seems, indeed, in literary life like the prize youth of the English educational system, to which he was a rare credit. He not only enjoyed Greek and Roman classics, but joyfully recalls the time when their instructive pleasures were first imparted to his youthful mind. By devoting his talents, thoughts, and efforts to British interests, a monarchist, yet an ardent Liberal, he perhaps offended some fellow-countrymen of Alison's or Scott's views by his utter contempt not only for the Jacobite cause, but for most of its supporters.

To Macaulay's accomplished mind, longing to see Britain first in the growing progress of science, literature, art, and all the peaceful blessings of civilisation, recollections of the banished Stuarts or their adherents had no charm whatever. The exploits of Greek and Roman heroes of antiquity he thoroughly enjoyed, but those of Scottish kings and Highland chiefs he almost disregards. His mind apparently transmits admiring homage from classic authors and heroes to Milton's poetry, Cromwell's triumphs, and, above all, to the sagacious policy of his chief hero, William III.

From the decline of the literary glories of Greece and Rome to the rise of those of England, which he first seems to recognise in Shakespeare, Macaulay sees little to praise in intellectual history. He admires Shakespeare's "supreme and universal excellence,"¹ which he acknowledges in literary appreciation, not as a political partisan. His admiration for Milton, as poet and politician, makes him write rather imprudently, yet always in an attractive style. His earliest essay on him is really a beautiful panegyric throughout; yet in a subsequent edition Macaulay declares that it contains scarcely a paragraph of which his "matured judgment" approved.

Again, in an imaginary conversation between Milton and the poet Cowley,² Macaulay makes the former reason like a wise, enlightened Liberal of the last century, but his prose works show little sign of any such love of justice or calm moderation as Macaulay attributes to him. Evidently the Milton of Macaulay and the Milton of reality were very different men. The former seems consistent enough with what the gifted author of "Paradise Lost" may be imagined, but is different, indeed, from the implacable denouncer of all his or Cromwell's political foes.

This numerous class, whether Catholic or Protestant, he termed "rebels" to the sovereign majesty of England, meaning the brave general who, representing a triumphant minority, had really "no party," as Macaulay himself owns, "beyond the limits of his

¹ Essay on Mitford's "Greece."

² See "Miscellaneous Works."

camp and fortresses.”¹ In fact, the “hero-worship” so admired by Macaulay’s literary cotemporary, Thomas Carlyle,² not perhaps in his instance, though it may sometimes arise from generous impulses, is most prejudicial to historic truth, and therefore to a historian’s value. Thus Macaulay, in his “History,” severely blames James II. for sternly enforcing the cruel laws of his time against rebels. But in describing William III.’s conduct towards the captured Jacobite, Sir John Fenwick, he can hardly pity the unfortunate foe of his great hero. He even mentions William’s gentle manner while refusing Lady Mary Fenwick’s petition for her husband’s life, though a pardon granted in the roughest possible way would have better deserved a fair historian’s praise.

This is one among many instances where Macaulay, through grateful enthusiasm for the brave, wise king, cannot resist writing like “an accomplished advocate,” as he calls Hume.³ This expression, though occa-

¹ “History of England,” Vol. 2nd.

² Essay on “Heroes and Hero-Worship” (p. 138), where, in noticing John Knox, Carlyle shows little objection to religious bigotry when opposing “falsehoods.” “We are here to extinguish falsehoods and put an end to them in some wise way. I will not quarrel so much with the way; the doing of the thing is our great concern.” But the question, what is falsehood and what is not, has perplexed wiser minds than those of either Knox or Carlyle.—See Sir G. C. Lewis’s “Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion.”

³ “Essay on History” (Miscellaneous Works), Vol. 1st, p. 170, where Macaulay’s description of Hume’s party spirit, written long before his own “History,” seems to describe himself with unconscious exactness.

sionally applicable to Hume, is equally, if not more so, to himself. Some of his opponents naturally exaggerate this tendency to hero-worship, and hence disparage the merits of his valuable history. But if fairly examined, its real worth is so great that this undeniable blemish as it usually appears without attempt at concealment is not likely to cause many wrong inferences. Indeed, his approval of William III.'s general policy resembles that of Scott in "Old Mortality," and when these eminent Whig and Tory Scottishmen praise the same man, a more satisfactory commendation could scarcely be desired.

Among Macaulay's early essays perhaps the most comprehensive and valuable is on "Ranke's History of the Popes." This able, vivid sketch of modern European thought describes the changes in Christian history during and since the Protestant Reformation. It shows that Catholicism in its constant strife with Atheism abroad has, on the whole, overcome it, at least up to this time (1904), while different forms of Protestantism have remained stationary for many years, less troubled, perhaps, by the attacks of Atheism, but not increasing in political dominion.

Macaulay, despite his love of liberty, shows no liking for French republicanism. His account of the "wild carnival," meaning the French revolution of the 18th century, shows no admiration for its leaders or principles, nor indeed much confidence in either the French monarchy or the Napoleon family. He seldom much praises foreign governments, while indulging hopeful anticipation of British progress and

pre-eminence, especially in the arts of peace. His enthusiasm on this subject, resembling Bacon in earnestness, yet appears in the eloquent language worthy of a classical scholar and accomplished modern Englishman, instead of in the old philosopher's sedate brevity.

Disappointed in political life, or unable to retain his seat in parliament, Macaulay's great mind practically obeyed the Spirit of Literature, which, in beautiful verses, he imagines advised him after an election defeat to exchange political for literary ambition.¹ Accordingly his last work on England's history proved the most famous of all his efforts. He chose a historical period which peculiarly interested him. William III.'s successful wisdom, enterprise, and tolerant policy made him Macaulay's political hero.

Every sensible patriot, every lover, not of his country alone, but of his fellow-man, should, in his opinion, praise and admire the rule of William III. But all opponents, no matter what their reasons for hostility, are more or less culpable according to the opposition they offered to Macaulay's model sovereign.

Not only are the gallant Jacobites, from Dundee to Fenwick inclusive, denied all admiration, but even the episcopal Primate, Sancroft, for refusing to acknowledge King William, and the Princess Anne for disliking her brother-in-law, alike incur indignant censure, the latter being termed "as culpable as her small faculties allowed." But the valiant, shrewd, victorious Marlborough is perhaps the greatest trial to

¹ Macaulay's "Miscellaneous Works," Vol. 2nd.

Macaulay's sensitive partiality. This famous general, the "Angel" of Addison's "Campaign," seems to Macaulay one of darkness, indeed, rather than of light. Though the chief promoter of William's triumph, he yet proved the constant and final tormentor of his life.

William, despite his power, could not treat his formidable adherent as Henry IV. had treated the Percy family, or as Richard III. had treated Buckingham, or as Henry VII. had treated Stanley. These three kings had alike discovered how dangerous the most valuable subjects may become when dissatisfied with the sovereign whom their own exertions have made such. It was William's fate, as Macaulay shows, to find his last years of nominally successful rule embittered, if not endangered, by that shrewd warrior, who foresaw that not till after his suspicious king's death could his own martial glory be displayed in the sight of an admiring nation. Macaulay's political antipathies in Marlborough's instance, and in some others, well deserve calm examination. He is so ardent in his likes and dislikes that he can hardly acknowledge real merit in opponents or serious error in partisans. When either come before his notice he—to quote his own description of Hume—"glides lightly over" the subject, much preferring the delightful task of praising illustrious, noble favourites and censuring or ridiculing wicked, contemptible foes. In mentioning the excellent Bishop Ken, who, with the Primate, Sancroft, opposed William III., he merely says "the little that is known of him is to

his honour," and so withdraws an estimable opponent from further notice. In the same spirit of eager, though not unscrupulous political prejudice, when describing the sale of Charles I. by Scottish Lowlanders to English republicans, Macaulay, while politically sympathising with both buyers and sellers, cannot resist owning that Charles was given up by the Scottish "in a way which did not much exalt their national honour," and drops the subject. Yet had this transaction been accomplished by Macaulay's opponents, his brief disapproval would probably have been exchanged for pages of eloquent, powerful invective.

In his Scottish chapters, Macaulay shows party spirit more fully, perhaps, than in any other parts of his work. When describing Claverhouse, Lord Dundee, very differently from Scott in "Old Mortality," he thinks, he viewed the Highlanders with "the contempt of a professional soldier." A dull, stupid private might have despised their inevitable ignorance of some points in military discipline in which he himself had been trained. But Dundee, an officer of education and experience, had evidently higher powers of military appreciation.

Nothing in his short, glorious campaign while leading Highlanders showed contempt for them, but precisely the reverse. He apparently perceived their many valuable military qualities, and by ably utilising them through his own superior knowledge he achieved the highest of military exploits in signally defeating a majority of foes. His heroic career was stopped by

death in the hour of victory ; but nothing in his short, brilliant campaign showed sign of future disaster. Yet Macaulay's civilised and civilising spirit can see nothing attractive, interesting, or even redeeming, in the conduct of brave, certainly ignorant, mountaineers, led by a relentless Jacobite officer, to restore a "banished oppressor," as he calls James II. He wishes, therefore, in this and other instances less remarkable, to prevent readers from sympathising with or admiring men who, despite some noble qualities, were yet, in his opinion, enemies to the best interests of their country.

Thus Macaulay, through patriotic enthusiasm, not moral recklessness, is induced to do, and, as a historian, to transmit, perhaps unconscious injustice to those differing from him on most important subjects. Their designs seem to his ardent mind so odious, inexcusable, and dangerous as to not only preclude admiration, but even sympathy for their exploits or misfortunes, which his historical knowledge cannot deny, yet which his political feelings forbid him either to praise or even much compassionate. It is, therefore, when dealing with literature, art, science, or legislative improvement that Macaulay's great mind, free from the narrowing influences of political excitement, can fully impart its intellectual treasures to attentive readers.

In every sentiment, effort, and wish he tries to raise the British intellect among cotemporary nations. His mind, ranging over wide fields of ancient and mediæval history, yet keeps all modern improvement,

enlightenment, and beneficent aspiration steadily in view, as the supreme objects of his literary career. He saw with that keen discernment of modern feelings and tastes, which he mingled so remarkably with admiration for classic thought and history, how the charms of fiction engrossed British readers, while history was often thought and rendered dull and uninteresting. He, therefore, boldly entered the literary lists amid a host of sensational novelists and produced a history which, despite occasional errors, caused by political enthusiasm, is, perhaps, unsurpassed for combined interest, varied knowledge, and general information.

CHAPTER XIII

CHARLES DICKENS AND OTHER WRITERS

IF among modern historians Macaulay is probably the most interesting, in fiction no English writer of his time has equalled Mr. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) in arousing most intense interest for the creations of unassisted imagination. Of all his works, the two which probably most address political as well as general readers are the "Pickwick Papers" and "Oliver Twist." The sketches of London life and character in "Pickwick" were, perhaps, never surpassed in public favour in the history of British fiction.

The ill-usage of imprisoned debtors, legal craft, roguery, and deception, are here involved with comic characters and incidents. These sad, serious, important subjects are shown to the public in such ludicrous and pathetic descriptions, yet so interesting to most readers, that they were studied by many who might never have cared for them in any other form. This book's immense popularity among all classes of Englishmen transformed a work of fiction, without historical character or event, into a practical lecture

on legislative improvements. Dickens, therefore, with natural exultation, says in the preface to its last edition that legal reforms had "pared the claws" of artful lawyers, and that the Fleet Prison for debtors was pulled down. "Pickwick" was among the first English works of fiction which dealt successfully with public abuses at the time of its publication.

Scott, in novels about the Jacobite revolts, earnestly addressed the public in behalf of the memory and motives of political victims. But, "like a pardon after execution," they came too late, except for the prevention of future legal cruelty by enlightening and calming the public mind, which had hitherto sanctioned it.

Dickens attacked prevalent abuses amid peaceful attention from the public. Had Scott written his Jacobite novels during the revolts of 1715 and 1745, he would likely have made many enemies. The alarmed, yet successful Government, doubtless expected that a Jacobite triumph would revive James II.'s cruelties under the vindictive auspices of his son or grandson. Scott would probably have been thought by many a traitor in disguise, trying by his eloquent pen to save those dangerous lives which, if spared their legal penalty, might yet be fatal to those of others. But Dickens had the British public mind on his side immediately. He himself represented the English intellect of his time, though gifted with rare exceptional powers to rouse its energy, express its spirit, and increase its information. Without exciting sedition or causing a single riot, this practical literary

reformer aided powerfully to effect those legal improvements which realised many desires of true patriotism without endangering the safety of any who, like Dr. Johnson, distrusted its much-abused name.

In "Oliver Twist" Dickens accomplished another object no less useful than that of "Pickwick," especially to the youth of England. In this interesting, exciting work he introduces the vilest characters imaginable, even in London, using consistent language while committing robberies and murders. Dickens's chief object, expressed in his remarkable preface to the third edition, is to expose the true characters of real thieves. He regrets, with eager earnestness, that nearly all he ever read of were made attractive in some way, either by courage, beauty, smart dress, or jovial and generous habits, but that, except in Hogarth's pictures, he never met with "the miserable reality."

This seems an extraordinary statement from one who had surely read Scott's "Heart of Midlothian," "Nigel," or "Pirate." In these works both "land thieves and water thieves" appear in their true natures, described with a force and genius fully equal to his own, though not, perhaps, with the same detailed minuteness.

Dickens protests against the censure of well-meaning but frivolous or short-sighted persons who blamed his introducing vicious language, even for the object of its condemnation. He mentions other authors who had done so, but omits Scott's name from the

list. He forcibly alludes to the dangerous attraction of Gay's Captain Macheath, in "The Beggar's Opera." This stage hero, like stories of the real Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard, made highway robbery seem attractive and romantic to excitable youths by associating it with courage, good looks, and a handsome uniform. He also mentions the Spanish bandit, Massaroni, the hero of a popular play, comparing him and Macheath to his own low ruffian, Bill Sikes, of modern London reality.

But Dickens ignores Scott's Frank Levitt, Jem Ratcliffe, Tyburn Tom, Colepepper, Goffe, Hawkins, &c., who are as uncompromising a set of thieves as were ever arrested by a constable or sentenced by a judge. In fact, the silence or ignorance of Dickens about Scott in all his works seems remarkable, especially in the preface to "Oliver Twist," where he apparently thinks himself the first novelist who described real thieves, divested of the absurd attractions given them by a mischievous yet popular fancy.

Dickens, however, may be mistaken, or misunderstood, in apparently implying that because his own creations, Fagin, Sikes, &c., are true to nature therefore the characters of Macheath, Massaroni, &c., are impossibilities. The fact is that these last, like Turpin and Jack Sheppard, belonged to different times, when men, driven desperate by misfortune, "took to the road," committing shameful robberies, yet preserving some redeeming qualities of their better days, whereas men like Fagin and Sikes will

probably always be found in great cities. But the moral object of Dickens in this really excellent work is to describe all vice as odious and repulsive as combined truth and genius could make it.

Shakespeare, in "Othello," makes the clever villain, Iago, secretly own that even his superior abilities do not make him so attractive as the gay, harmless Cassio. Dickens, following in the same moral track with consistent truth, degrades all imaginary villains to the level of the irrepulsive reality. Like Shakespeare's advice to actors, Dickens carefully holds a literary "mirror up to nature to show virtue her own feature," &c. He makes cruelty, robbery, and profligacy alike odious throughout "Oliver Twist," while charity, honesty, and innocence are made so attractive that its results among London youths, whom it specially addressed, could not fail to win their sympathies for law and order rather than for any form of license or street ruffianism, both too often mischievously associated with love of liberty and perverted courage.

The influence of Dickens was entirely through the medium of literature. He never tried to enter Parliament, nor showed any wish to take part in politics. His attacks on legal abuses in "Pickwick" and "Bleak House," on the ill-usage of children in "Nickleby" and "Oliver Twist," and his constant warfare with religious hypocrisy in "Chuzzlewit," "Copperfield," "Barnaby Rudge," and "Edwin Drood," are among the chief subjects of his writings.

The somewhat similar characters, (1) Pecksniff, (2) Uriah Heep, (3) Chadband, (4) Stiggins, (5) Gashford, and (6) Honeythunder,¹ seem produced by a time of religious and political peace. They are, in fact, the disgraceful growth of a civilised, tranquil period. During religious or political strife such men would probably be more easily exposed. Sincere fanaticism would then be often powerful and always influential; but the utter hypocrisy of these men in Dickens's six books is likely to be proved during religious warfare or persecution. In such times men so thoroughly worldly would be comparatively unknown unless gifted with far higher abilities than these imaginary persons display.

Their mischievous influence in Dickens's novels keenly exposes the credulous folly which he had doubtless detected in modern English society, when the laws, comparatively free from the spirit of persecution, could only in cases of legal infraction check the practical cunning of religious hypocrisy. As in the case of the French impostor, Tartuffe, in Molière's celebrated play, such moral deception, as Dickens well knew, is often successful even among people of education, without aid or sanction from either political, legal, or religious authority.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), like Dickens, describes hypocrisy far more than he does religious fanaticism, that terrible curse to humanity

¹ (1) "Martin Chuzzlewit;" (2) "David Copperfield;" (3) "Bleak House;" (4) "Pickwick Papers;" (5) "Barnaby Rudge;" (6) "Edwin Drood."

during the Middle Ages in most Christian countries. In his chief works, "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," "The Newcomes," &c., he exposes with keen sarcasm meanness, deceit, and selfishness too often found even among civilised Englishmen of his time. In his Essays on "The Four Georges," Thackeray, while evidently disliking both George I. and George II., shows no sympathy with their defeated Jacobite foes. There is apparently little liking for political history in this great novelist. These essays, written with his usual keen perception of character, show no sympathy, either, with republican feelings, though his unsparing censure on the two first and on the last of the Georges might incline some republicans to expect it. His essay on George III. shows his compassionate feeling towards that amiable and unhappy king, while his scornful dislike to George IV., shown also by allusion in other works, never makes him encourage enmity to the British monarchy. There is nothing of the rebel or of the political partisan in Thackeray. His remarks on kings and statesmen are entirely personal, and are evidently more those of a novelist than of a historian. He says little about politics, and seems, perhaps, like Miss Austen and Dr. Johnson, to devote his talents chiefly to exposing pride and false pretences among fellow-countrymen of his own period. His popularity never equalled that of Dickens, and his imaginary characters, though so ably and consistently drawn, were never so celebrated. It may be regretted that so strong and discerning a mind as Thackeray's took neither interest

nor pleasure in classic scenes, studies, or characters. He admits this indifference when describing his visit to Greece, attributing it chiefly to his ill-usage at school and by schoolmasters; while his illustrious cotemporary, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, recalled classic scenes, manners, and customs in novels and speeches; and Macaulay, another cotemporary, mentions them in historical essays with the keenest interest, delight, and admiration. In Bulwer Lytton's "Last Days of Pompeii," and in Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," these highly-educated Englishmen, as novelist and poet, display a love for classic times like that of Walter Scott for the romances, legends, and historical characters of British history. Dickens and Thackeray rarely allude to these subjects, but keep their observant, examining minds chiefly, almost exclusively, fixed on modern English life and character of their own period. Except indirectly, however, neither had much influence in British politics. Mr. Thackeray attempted to enter Parliament, but failed, and then devoted his time and thoughts to literary work, for which, like Dickens, he was probably far more suited.

Dickens seldom, if ever, mentions sincere religious fanaticism, which yet, according to history, has done far more harm to mankind generally than the comparatively trifling injury committed by cunning hypocrites. Perhaps Dickens, despite his keen intelligence, yet thought modern times more enlightened in this respect than history has shown during the last few years.

Unlike Dickens, the celebrated Conservative premier,

Benjamin Disraeli, addressed the British intellect far more successfully by public speaking and political policy than by his literary efforts. None of the latter, indeed, showed the real greatness of his mind. His works, chiefly novels about modern English aristocratic society, were written apparently as a relief from political business. None of his imaginary characters have won public interest. He seldom introduces historical events or personages, preferring to describe English gentry usually discussing political affairs.

Most of his heroes, like *Coningsby*, *Lothair*, &c., are either politicians or mix in political society. In his one biography of Lord George Bentinck, he writes in a different style from his other works, introducing a remarkable chapter (24th), which seems not much connected with the rest of the book. In it he mentions both ancient and modern Jews, with great admiration for the many services which, he declares, mankind generally owes to them. He himself a member of the Anglican Church, though of Jewish family, as earnestly praises the ancient Jews in comparing them with other nations as if he still belonged to their faith.

He ends this singular chapter by asking, "Who can deny that Christ is the eternal glory of the Jewish race?" The answer to this query, which was surely in the minds of all Jews who read it, was never publicly given. Apparently neither British nor foreign Jews ever took public notice of Disraeli's peculiar opinions about them. The gratified pride with which they viewed so illustrious a member of their race, who,

though a Christian, still praised their ancestors,¹ probably kept them silent, otherwise their preserved Judaism would surely have elicited the traditional denial which Disraeli challenges. This remarkable chapter, addressed alike to Christians and Jews of education, attracted surprisingly little public attention and evoked no reply.

British Conservatives, whom Disraeli headed, and among whom he lived, were probably too much engrossed by practical politics to follow their chief into discussions which could only be properly maintained with unconverted Jews. His Liberal opponents also were evidently too much engaged in political contests with him to much notice his theological views. Except in occasional chapters, Disraeli showed comparatively slight interest in any subject but British political affairs. In them lay his chosen sphere of action. He was admired, respected, or distrusted and ridiculed, throughout Britain, in London especially, where his appearance, nearly as remarkable as his character, genius, and position, was the favourite subject of friendly and hostile caricatures.

But his extraordinary talents and success amazed all parties. Opponents and partisans were alike astonished to see a man of Jewish origin, without influential relatives, or any royal favour, yet gradually acquire complete supremacy over most of the British aristocracy, who, unlike the fallen French or Spanish nobility, were still considered by national consent and legislative function among the "pillars of the State."¹

¹ Shakespeare's "Henry VI."

CHAPTER XIV

GREEN AND BUCKLE

MR. GREEN'S "History of the English People," written after Macaulay's great work, takes comparatively slight notice of monarchs and statesmen while carefully describing the general progress of the nation. His work includes sketches of Scottish and Irish history, and his style is easy, free, and pleasant. His opinions are more like those of Macaulay than of Hume, but, unlike them, he seems rather indifferent about particular personages, even when agreeing with his own views. He apparently has no historical favourites; no special likes and dislikes. While sympathising with Queen Elizabeth against her many foes, yet his contempt for her vanity overcomes much respect for her talents and energy. His admiration for Shakespeare, whose love of monarchy he fully owns, and his praises of Bacon, Raleigh, and other great men, do not long detain him from his careful, intelligent, but unadorned historical narrative. Though a decided Liberal, he neither shows enmity to opponents nor much reliance on particular partisans.

Mr. Green has neither the power nor, perhaps, the

inclination to rival Macaulay in style, or in those brilliant classical allusions which make the latter so instructive as well as interesting. As Green seldom mentions classic writers, it would be difficult to say, from his history, if he was much acquainted with them. He shows little knowledge of, or at least little interest in, the ancient or cotemporaneous histories of foreign nations. He plainly and intelligently addresses the British public in a useful, clearly-told, practical history of the nation.

Though his Protestant preferences may occasionally displease Catholic readers, he never, like Hume or Gibbon, sneers at any form of religion. He associates Roman Catholicism in England a good deal with the foreign intrigues or influences of France and Spain.¹ He does not, perhaps, enough notice or consider the old English Catholic families whose religion necessitated intercourse with learned co-religionists in lands often hostile to their own, yet whose loyalty was proved by their retaining their estates, while denied many political privileges.

Green's work obtained great popular favour in England, and went through many editions. Its moderate, careful, business-like style well suited a large majority of British readers, but classical scholars, or men of fastidious, literary taste, will never find in him the beauty of language, and learned comprehensiveness, which make Macaulay's work at once delightful and instructive. While Green addressed British readers almost exclusively, his cotemporary,

¹ See his "Reign of Elizabeth," Vol. 2nd.

Mr. Buckle, selected a far wider field for his literary labours. His "History of Civilisation" has seldom, if ever, been surpassed in a work of the kind for vast research, almost incredible reading, and immense acquaintance with nearly all existing literature. He is an "advanced Liberal" in every sense. His admiration for the blessings, advantages, and triumphs of civilisation is so ardent, that though a sincere friend to mankind, his enthusiasm for what he believes the good of the majority makes him rather reckless about individual rights, or even personal honour. For instance, when describing the sale of Charles I. by Scottish to English republicans, he deliberately justifies an act which even Macaulay censures, despite his political sympathies.¹

Buckle considers it like the capture of some notorious criminal, whose villainy had injured thousands of honest, truthful men. He sees nothing in Charles I. but an odious obstacle to human progress and happiness, and, therefore, the sooner he is out of the way the better. Buckle's eager animosity against all despotic systems, which his enthusiasm always identi-

¹ "The Scotch, instead of pardoning him, turned him to profit. And as in an old and recognised maxim, that he who cannot pay with his purse shall pay with his body, the Scotch saw no reason why they should not derive some advantage. They, therefore, gave him up to the English, and in return received a large sum of money. By this arrangement both of the contracting parties benefited. The Scotch, being very poor, obtained what they most lacked. The English, a wealthy people, had indeed to pay the money, but they were recompensed by getting hold of their oppressor, against whom they thirsted for revenge."—Vol. 3rd.

fies with tyranny, appears most strongly in his remarkable allusion to Russia. While devoting no special chapter to that country, and making comparatively little mention of it, yet the little he says had evidently more effect in exciting or increasing revolutionary desires than the rest of his book had in any other country.

His long chapters on Spain and Scotland roused far less interest or political attention ; but his few earnest, emphatic words about Russia produced such an effect that his book, translated into Russian, was often found in the possession of arrested Nihilist revolutionists. Their dangerous conspiracy culminated in the deliberate murder of the late Emperor Alexander. It has since been sternly suppressed by many executions and the life-long imprisonment of many persons of education, both men and women. It has hitherto never assumed the form of open rebellion. As yet it is revealed in murders and murderous attempts alone, and among its leaders are found people whose conduct and character seem strangely at variance with their political fanaticism or desperation. To such persons Buckle's words were apparently like fuel to fire.¹ They are not long, grave, political discussions.

¹ "Russia is a warlike country, not because the inhabitants are immoral, but because they are unintellectual. The fault is in the head, not the heart. In Russia, the national intellect being little cultivated, the intellectual classes lack influence ; the military class, therefore, is supreme. In this early stage of society there is as yet no middle rank, and consequently the thoughtful and pacific habits which spring from the middle ranks have no existence. The minds

They are not eloquent incentives to revolution. They are calm, clear, emphatic sentences, partly compassionate, partly provoking, without any of the zealous, impatient ardour with which he notices religious and political bigotry in Spain and Scotland.

Yet Buckle, like some other able writers, did not know his own strength, or rather in what direction, or by what language, it would have most effect. Hence his long chapter on Spain had little, if any, influence in that stationary country, while his contemptuous, reproachful mention of Scottish prejudices was firmly refuted by national pride and religious conviction in Scotland.

But when Buckle, with the keen force of his peculiar genius, without exciting himself, as he does about Spain and Scotland, attacks Russian military rule, his success, though glorious indeed for his book's circulation, was most disastrous to its admirers.

Among the captured Nihilists were usually some officers, who, strange to say, instead of being indignant at Buckle's dislike to their profession, were practically converted to his views, or confirmed in revolutionary ideas by the persuasive energy of his words. In dealing with "the Scottish intellect," as

of men, deprived of mental pursuits, naturally turn to warlike ones as the only resource remaining to them. Hence it is that in Russia all ability is estimated by a military standard. The army is considered to be the greatest glory of the country ; to win a battle or to outwit an enemy is valued as one of the noblest achievements of life, and civilians, whatever their merits may be, are despised by this barbarous people as beings of an altogether inferior and subordinate character."—Vol. 1st, Ch. IV.

he calls it, he encountered far more incredulity than among the "barbarous" Russians. He also offended British Roman Catholics, especially by his remarks on Spain, and incurred the censure of Professor Robertson, who calls his "History" "impious" and absurd."¹

In describing Scottish ideas, Buckle, with an impartial dislike to all clergy, which might, perhaps, have united the Papacy and the Reformers against him, sharply ridicules the Presbyterian ministers with an eager vehemence very different from his calm allusions to Russia. Yet his remarks on Scotland, like those on Spain, were comparatively unheeded.²

The vehemence of his language in both cases apparently rather weakened than increased its effect, while his Russian references, so few, yet so dangerously attractive, were seized upon by alarmed Russian statesmen like literary explosives. Buckle ends his interesting and learned work by an amusing yet important allusion to a dispute between the Scottish

¹ Robertson's "Lectures on Modern History," p. 169.

² After praising a few Scottish writers, Buckle declares that Scotland is still "awed by a few noisy and ignorant preachers, to whom it allows a license and yields a submission disgraceful to the age, and incompatible with the commonest notions of liberty." He adds that the Scotch, in religious matters, "display a littleness of mind and a love of persecuting others, which shows that the Protestantism of which they boast has done them no good," and that their prejudices "make them the laughing-stock of Europe, and have turned the very name of the Scotch Kirk into a by-word and a reproach among educated men."—"History of Civilisation," Vol. 3rd.

clergy and the late Lord Palmerston when Prime Minister.

In 1853 Asiatic cholera visited Scotland, and while its clergy offered up prayers, the practical Premier, strongly, and, at last, sarcastically, urged the Scottish, in words, perhaps, more taunting than persuasive, to take sanitary measures against it, and not trust to prayers alone, which he evidently thought them inclined to do.¹ Buckle highly praises Lord Palmerston's words, declaring had they been known two centuries earlier they would have "ruined him socially and politically." He ends his industrious work with an earnest appeal to the Scotch, in whom he takes special interest, to be more just and tolerant than he thinks they were even in the last century.

Unlike Scott, however, Buckle, in condemning religious bigotry, both in Spain and Scotland, shows some of that "heat of temper" which he censures in others. He is so impatient with opponents that his zealous words are often more likely to irritate than convince. His scornful mention of the Scottish Kirk would likely have less influence in checking religious prejudices than Scott's calm wisdom, who, with a fairness to opponents equally rare and valuable, temperately proved their absurdity.

The latter describes a worthy Presbyterian clergyman preaching to victorious co-religionists, first vin-

¹ Lord Palmerston, in a public letter, suggests the cleaning and purification of houses, lest the dreaded cholera should become a pestilence, "In spite of all the prayers and fastings of a united but inactive nation."—Quoted in Buckle's "History," Vol. 3rd.

dicating every man's right to worship according to his conscience, but finally suggesting that all who differ from his own religion should be expelled the country, so as to "re-edify, in its integrity, the beauty of the sanctuary," &c.¹ Allusions so sensible and forbearing, so free from prejudice even against the prejudiced, and so just towards those unjust yet well meaning men with whom impartial history abounds, are surely more likely to improve men's minds than Buckle's impatient bitterness, which often seems inconsistent with that civilised enlightenment of which he is such a brilliant advocate.

¹ "Old Mortality."

CHAPTER XV

RECENT WRITERS

THOUGH Buckle's dislike to all clerical influence shows little sectarian preference, his views were probably more warmly opposed by Roman Catholicism than by any other Christian denomination. As a rule, British literary men in the last century have decidedly opposed that religion. Protestantism in different forms, Deism or Atheism, while opposing each other, have usually been avowed or insinuated by British writers of this century. The secessions, therefore, of Drs. Manning and Newman from the Established Anglican to the Roman Catholic Church were all the more surprising to Protestants and cheering to Catholics. Both were dignitaries in the Episcopal English Church, learned men, with every educational advantage, social privilege, and intellectual acquirement.

They moved in the highest British society, enjoying free intercourse with the most cultivated, distinguished, and eminent minds, including the chief statesmen of their times. Yet, to the surprise alike of enlightened and ignorant fellow-countrymen, they openly declared

that they believed the former faith of England, though abandoned for centuries by the majority, was the one true version of Christianity.

Though Manning, being first made a Cardinal, held a higher ecclesiastical position than Newman, yet the latter's vast learning and rare talents, shown in the comprehensive power of his writings, most attracted the attention of the British intellect. The rival Premiers, Gladstone and Disraeli, each regretted his change of faith ; and agreed in expressing admiration for his abilities. The former has called him the most fascinating of living English writers, while Disraeli wrote that his secession "dealt the Church of England a blow from which it still reels";¹ and was "a mistake and a misfortune."

Probably had Newman remained in the Protestant Church he might have attained its highest dignity under the auspices of either Prime Minister, who, though in constant opposition to each other, yet united in respecting one who had left the church to which they both adhered.

Newman's works are numerous, varied, and profound, yet always expressed in remarkably pure, elegant English. They are chiefly addressed, however, to learned, thoughtful men. He is not usually in style, subject, or intention a popular writer. His "Sermons to Mixed Congregations," though easier to understand than his "Grammar of Assent," "Development of Christian Doctrine," or "Apology" for his

¹ Preface to "Lothair."

own life, are yet more suited to educated than to ignorant people.

Newman seems more fitted to refute among learned men the frequent Protestant assertion that Catholicism is inconsistent with mental knowledge and enlightenment than to be followed or trusted by converted multitudes. Thus his intellectual gifts, while commanding the highest admiration of learned men, while perplexing, if not convincing, some highly educated Protestants, yet failed on the whole either to benefit Catholicism or discourage Protestantism among the comparatively ignorant majority. As if born to show a British world of Protestant opponents that the "milk-white hind was fated not to die," Newman, with all the advantages of modern English education, entered the literary lists against a numerous host of non-Catholic writers. In defence or vindication of the ancient faith he uses all those gifts of eloquent expression, profound reasoning, and vast learning which, in Britain especially, were formerly directed with powerful effect against it.

Newman, among the first intellects of the 19th century, endowed with every gift of education, social advantage, and natural talents of the very highest order, willingly exchanged the triumphant Protestantism of his country for its superseded and politically degraded predecessor. In this superstitious form of Christianity, as its opponents term it, Newman's grand, cultured intellect maintained it had found Christian truth after a long, careful, and conscientious examination of all that could be said for

Protestantism. Catholicism, despite its abandonment, by the British majority, the triumph of the Anglican and of other Protestant denominations, despite even the hostile incredulity with which it was viewed generally throughout Britain, at length found a believer, an advocate, and a champion in one of the most gifted and enlightened of religious Englishmen.

Though Messrs. Gladstone and Disraeli agreed in admiration for Newman, they expressed it to the British public in very different ways. While Disraeli often expressed his opinions through political or sentimental novels, Mr. Gladstone from early manhood found a rare pleasure in employing his leisure by writing on profound subjects.

When a young man he wrote a treatise on the English Established Church, while Macaulay, then a young Liberal essayist, called him the "rising hope of unbending Tories," to whom he became in later life a formidable foe. Yet his works, rather like Newman's, were mostly, if not exclusively, suited to a highly educated minority among the British public. His learned essays on ancient Greek poetry and many subsequent political articles in magazines scarcely show the same vigour of mind or impressive power which his public speeches often display. In them lies his chief strength, as history has proved.

Whenever he spoke in public, either in Parliament, at elections, political meetings, or even, when travelling, at railway stations, his intense earnestness, grasp of mind, and force of expression, commanded general attention, and rendered him, on the whole, perhaps, the

most popular of living English statesmen of his time. The combined interest and knowledge he showed about an almost endless variety of subjects are more revealed in his speeches and letters than in his published works. The latter were generally more addressed to learned scholars, while his public utterances were often addressed to all classes. In recent years his changed Irish policy politically, if not socially, alienated him from many intellectual friends and admirers.

Among his literary cotemporaries, the late Poet Laureate, Lord Tennyson, was one of the most remarkable. His best known poems are not meant to affect politics, but refer chiefly to imaginary events.

During the Crimean war, Tennyson praised and celebrated British valour, but usually his poetry favours a "peace policy" and the Liberal party, to which he belonged. Mr. Gladstone's altered views about Ireland being opposed by many able British Liberals, Tennyson essayed his literary influence, by entreating the public, in poetry, to "hold their own" by opposing the contemplated separation of Ireland from Britain.

Except in a few verses, however, Tennyson has shown little interest in public affairs, yet, owing to his great popularity, especially among people who are not political, his views rarely, yet emphatically, expressed, may have had considerable influence.

Among the most thoughtful of recent British authors, the calm, philosophic Herbert Spencer held a foremost place (1820-1904). His works are usually

meant for, or more suited to, a highly educated minority than to general readers. Some of his best works, therefore, are probably not known to many whom they would greatly benefit. His work on education is perhaps the most likely to have practical influence in both British homes and schools. Its wise advice, the real value of its hints and suggestions, as well as its warnings, have apparently aided, at least, to produce actual results.

The British educational system seems already more in accord with his views than before his valuable book was written. Like some other literary instructors, Herbert Spencer's influence is probably more real and permanent than known or acknowledged. He took no part in politics, and apparently solicited no public applause or notice. His calm, reasoning books are spread through Britain, chiefly among its most learned men, while their author apparently preferred a life of literary seclusion to political influence. Yet his last work, "Facts and Comments," reveals his eager preference for a "peace policy" almost at the cost of other considerations. He does not hesitate to blame British statesmen of his time with extreme severity for their public conduct, which, considering his own retired, studious, and non-political life, may seem rather surprising. In his political opinions he is apparently among the minority of his fellow-countrymen, and decidedly one of the ablest of them. It may be doubted if many practical politicians either in Britain or on the Continent would share his views, and probably might think they were only suited to, or

be well understood by, people of his own rare character and turn of mind.

Among writers whose love of English history enables them to render even its details interesting as well as instructive, Dean Stanley of Westminster (1815-1881) holds a foremost place. His work, "Memorials of Westminster Abbey," perhaps more than any other of his books, proves his knowledge of England's history and of its most distinguished men. He is essentially a lover of truth from important facts to comparatively trifling details, and his description of the Abbey, with its historical references of surprising exactness, indicates that he might have made a most valuable historian.

Of late years British literature in weekly or monthly magazines, besides an increasing amount of newspapers and periodicals, engages public attention more than separate works upon any subject.¹ Articles in newspapers and magazines are usually unsigned, the authors thus remaining unknown contributors to public information. This style of literature, accessible, pleasant, and instructive, has become so popular among many who seldom read anything else that it greatly excludes from public notice many works which deserve, and would otherwise obtain it. In recent history it is evident, however, from revealed plots and

¹ "A feature of the present age is the growth of periodical literature. The *Book* has become too laborious, too tedious a thing for this over-worked age. We have come to require stimulants in our reading. Everybody reads something, and few read much."—*"Shaw's History of English Literature,"* Ch. XXIV.

conspiracies that literature, by passionate or stirring appeals to political discontent has irritated, hardened, and inflamed many ignorant minds by its exciting power, rather than improved them by its enlightening influence. As before observed, Buckle's translated remarks on Russia greatly aroused or encouraged Nihilism in that country. In Ireland likewise, the one-sided histories of its wars and rebellions, popular poetry, and "party" songs have all tended to confirm religious and political enmities.

In most Irish historical sketches, and even ballads, there is some truth. If utterly false, they would be more easily refuted and do less harm. It is when some historic truth is recklessly exaggerated by dishonest or enthusiastic men, whether in speeches, poems, histories, or sermons, that it is so dangerous among a divided community.

The moral contrast between British and Irish history is, perhaps, partly explained by the different motives and principles of their political literature. During the last British civil wars of 1715 and 1745 there was no fear or threat of assassination expressed in speeches, ballads, or newspaper articles. There were no murder conspiracies. All punishment of political offences was inflicted by the existing Government. No murderous outrages were committed by opposing partisans upon each other. In Ireland even now political and religious divisions, though prevented by unpopular laws from declaring open war, cannot be said to live in voluntary peace together.

The feelings which usually animate opposing Irish-

men are those of suppressed civil war. They are not, as in Great Britain, the calm disagreement of free men in matters of opinion. In Irish political literature there often seems a confused idea that those opposing the writer know better all the time, and are thus morally and politically wrong. Their motives or characters are often represented as odious and false as their actions or opinions. All well-meaning as well as right-judging persons are often supposed to be on one side and their opponents to be destitute of redeeming qualities or any justification. "Party" spirit of this unreasoning nature between Christian, religious, or political divisions has long ceased, if it ever existed, throughout Britain.

In most countries when civil war is over, animosities between supposed descendants of former foes disappear through time, while in Ireland they are transmitted for generations even during apparent tranquillity. Its divided inhabitants too often regard each other like foes enjoying a brief truce during a warfare which has never really ended and will probably be renewed.

CHAPTER XVI

RECENT WRITERS (*continued*)

WITHIN the last thirty years Ireland has engaged British literary attention more than any other part of the Empire. In former times during open rebellion, foreign invasions, or apprehended revolts, its condition was chiefly discussed in brilliant political speeches throughout England and Ireland. It was also the constant subject of poetic allusion, earnest theological argument, and eloquent entreaties for sympathy, or interference of foreign nations. But latterly the English daily and weekly press, monthly magazines, and periodicals of every kind, have constantly supplied articles on Ireland.

The English press has, indeed, been nearly as much interested in it as the Irish for the last few years. Probably never before was the precious time of Parliamentary legislation so engrossed by Irish affairs or so devoted to their political study. Among the chief English writers on Ireland Mr. Froude is conspicuous. Though his previous works on Henry VIII.'s reign and "Short Studies on Great Subjects"

first made him known, yet his later work, "The English in Ireland," probably most interested politicians of his time. While strongly favouring British rule, he yet blames the English in many ways for their government of Ireland, especially for not, as he thinks, sufficiently encouraging the Scottish Presbyterians in Ulster, who, with English Prelatists, upheld British rule as firmly as they could, when surrounded by a hostile Catholic majority.

Froude's antipathy to Catholicism is comparatively controlled in his "Short Studies." In them he calmly discusses the chance of a Catholic "revival" in England, while reviewing the "intellectual conjuror," as he calls Newman. But in dealing with Ireland, a subject specially needing calm examination, his anti-Catholic feelings overcome all restraint. The "Short Studies" are perhaps, therefore, the most instructive of his works, as they show his vigorous mind and shrewd common sense with less of those prejudices from which few writers on Ireland are willing or, perhaps, able to free themselves.

With very different religious and political sentiments Mr. A. M. Sullivan addressed the British and Irish public, the latter especially in his "New Ireland." This work, written in a pleasing style, has no liking for British rule in Ireland, yet suggests no very definite substitute. Though a sincere Catholic, he carefully avoids hostile mention of Irish Protestants. He often praises the American republic, apparently wishing to incline his fellow-countrymen to its imita-

tion. Like many Irish historians of late years, he chooses the United States instead of France for the special object of Irish admiration.

He seldom mentions the quarrels between Irish Catholics and Protestants, and certainly underrates their importance, his sanguine, hopeful mind fancifully anticipating what reality has not yet shown.¹ Writing in 1887, he joyfully announces "the almost total disappearance of sectarian animosities in Ireland and the kindly mingling of creeds and classes." The disastrous, troubled history of Ireland since these words were written, and since the writer's death, have, indeed, contradicted their pleasing assumption.

Sullivan's work seems that of an amiable, fanciful man gratifying his own ideas by an imaginary picture of their realisation. His Irish historical successor, Mr. Justin M'Carthy, appeals to the British and Irish public in several works, the chief being his "History of Our Own Times." He is a more practical writer, better acquainted with general politics and English society than Mr. Sullivan proves himself. M'Carthy's first volumes show little "party" feeling, but in the last he greatly censures the Conservatives and their leader, Lord Beaconsfield, while placing all confidence in his political chief, Mr. Charles Stewart Parnell.

He rather ridicules Mr. Smith O'Brien's attempted revolt² in 1848, and even excuses the British Govern-

¹ "New Ireland," Vol. 2nd, p. 410.

² "History of Our Own Times," Vol. 1st.

ment for arresting O'Brien's impetuous follower, Mr. John Mitchel.¹ M'Carthy, in his interesting historical review of many countries during late years, keeps a vigilant, steady eye upon Ireland. Like Mr. Sullivan, he does not definitely advise its total severance from Britain, while he is warmly in favour of local government. In common with most of the Home Rule, or Nationalist, party, he places that thorough confidence in Mr. Parnell's wisdom and patriotic purpose with which that remarkable man for some time inspired most of his followers.

M'Carthy also shows in chapters on literature that in London he has profited by its intellectual treasures in studying them during the leisure of Parliamentary business. His mind, enlightened by such advantages, and, with a natural capacity for utilising them, examines many literary and artistic, as well as political, subjects, of which Mr. Sullivan seems comparatively ignorant.

In its political aspect M'Carthy's history seems written to show the British public that Irish Home Rule can be advocated by one having that knowledge of British history and general enlightenment which hitherto more distinguished its opponents than supporters. In this respect even Mr. Gladstone's adoption of M'Carthy's views, or similar ones, has not, generally speaking, influenced British literature in favour of his changed opinions. With some remarkable excep-

¹ "History of Our Own Times," Vol. 2nd.

tions the majority of British literary men in all parties steadily opposed Mr. Parnell's Irish policy, of which Justin M'Carthy is one of the chief literary exponents.

Among the former Mr. W. H. Lecky was one of the most able, most gifted, and, as a historian, perhaps the most reliable, of modern British writers (1838-1903). Of his first works, "The Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland" and "History of Rationalism" are the most important. His views about the leading Irishmen of past times, however, though distinguished by that calm discrimination for which he is always remarkable, cannot display the vast historical knowledge which his "Rationalism" imparts to all studious readers. This work, almost equally interesting and instructive, raised its author's reputation to a height both deserved and enviable.

Mr. Lecky addresses his readers very fully about Magic and Witchcraft, as well as religious persecution, and the general progress of the European intellect. His style, in this work especially, is so brilliant and interesting, while devoted to historical facts, that it shows much of Macaulay's charm, combined with a learned research worthy of Mr. Hallam. In his longest work, "History of England in the 18th Century," including Scotland and Ireland, his great historical information and political fairness are more apparent than the beauty of style or eloquence of expression which so distinguish his work on "Rationalism."

He is evidently resolved to write truly about

England's history, its chief men and chief events. He devotes his talents, therefore, to the cause of political justice, and comparatively disregards literary attraction. The work, though doubtless most useful to rising statesmen and young politicians, has not that literary brilliancy which Mr. Lecky possesses, perhaps, in a greater degree than any English historian since Macaulay.

Like Scott's "History of Scotland," where the great novelist abandoning fanciful romances, devotes himself to historical narration, Mr. Lecky lays aside his former attractive style. He writes on British history with the careful discrimination of a conscientious and responsible as well as an able exponent. His chapters on Ireland are, therefore, specially valuable, probably more so than those on Great Britain for the plain reason that the latter has produced many historians whose prejudices are usually slight indeed compared to those which pervert the judgment of most writers on Irish history. Yet Lecky's remarks on Ireland are more likely to be appreciated in Britain or on the Continent than in Ireland, at least for many years to come.

In a land where political party spirit, allied with religious antipathies and involved with agrarian disputes, is supreme, popular, and thought real patriotism, a writer like Mr. Lecky is sure to be misunderstood or undervalued. His love of historic truth and total freedom from political and religious bigotry are the very reasons why, at least up to this time, his valuable history will probably be little read

or admired in Ireland. In fact, his chief merits are real obstacles to popularity in a land where religious and political enmities are usually supported, approved, and inspired with the credulity, eloquence, and enthusiasm of a past age.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUDING REMARKS

AT the beginning of the 20th century Englishmen should be the best educated people the world has yet seen. The political triumph of Christianity in late years has greatly promoted this result. No non-Christian power is now really formidable. Asia, north and south, is either ruled or influenced more and more by Russia and England, and for many years Egypt also has been under British control. This vast political supremacy of European Christians over countries hitherto independent of them both enlightens and enriches the cities of Europe with antiquarian knowledge, geographical discovery, and classic confirmation. No Asiatic, African, or native American race has acquired much political power for many years.

European arms, laws, rule, and influence are steadily increasing throughout the known world, all opposition to them gradually diminishing through the progress of time. The history and political position of Britain afford probably more means of acquiring general

knowledge than any other country has possessed since the fall of the Roman empire.

The wisdom of ancient writers in lands far from Britain has been combined with a vast increase of general knowledge and antiquarian discovery. While the Jewish Scriptures are preserved as a precious religious inheritance transmitted to both Christians and Mohammedans, the geography, literature, and history of the old world have been recently more thoroughly examined than ever before.

The instruction and attraction of classical literature always encouraged and rewarded even mediæval, but especially modern European travellers, students, and translators. In western Europe for centuries literature has been more and more connected with and enriched by fresh discoveries and acquisitions.

Ancient Greek, Roman, and Hebrew literature have long been little studied in either Athens, Rome, or Jerusalem. In modern European capitals, London especially, they are far more appreciated, far better known, and far more money devoted to their republication, safety, and examination. The best Greek, Latin, and Hebrew scholars are now found in England or Germany. Neither Italians nor modern Greeks rival British and German students of their ancestral literature in learning, industry, or taste.

The best educated, most wealthy, and influential Jews have long resided in western Europe. Some of their race visit or dwell in Jerusalem from historical interest, piety, or curiosity, but their wealth, enterprise, and talents are devoted to European

countries, and more, perhaps, to England than to any other.

During the 19th century the increasing intercourse of Europe with Asia and Africa, the travels, labours, and researches of Layard, Rawlinson, and other writers, chiefly English, German, and Italian, alike extend and confirm the classic knowledge bequeathed by antiquity.

Though some foreign travellers, scholars, and antiquarians, like Schliemann and Maspero, fairly rival British explorers and discoverers, yet their works promptly translated into English, and the encouragement given them by British influence and approval, surely place England in the proud position of chief patron, protector, and general promoter of European intellectual enterprise. British literary research, often aided by foreign scholars, finds in the old world, once mostly comprised in the vast Roman Empire, a still increasing amount of antiquarian knowledge.

Egypt, "the mother of Athens"¹ and Grecian learning, Troy, the scene of the first and noblest poem ever written, Nineveh and other places of most ancient historic interest, have, in the last century, revealed more of their buried secrets than ever, through the literary test, resources, and examination of accomplished Europeans. Egypt, especially in the past century, seems the chief scene of European research, guided by literary study and rewarded by European appreciation.

Its Mohammedan and Coptic natives can only

¹ Lord Lytton's "Last Days of Pompeii."

wonder at these discoveries. They neither inherit information nor render assistance save by paid bodily exertions. The Europeans, consulting Herodotus and other ancient writers, unite historical and antiquarian knowledge of the past with the political power and financial resources of the present. The excavated earth reveals its long-concealed treasures to learned studios, inquiring Europeans, whose literary and historic acquirements transform them almost into coteremporary examiners.

Thus, long after the discoveries of the new worlds of America and Australasia, with all their additions to the knowledge and collections of botanists, naturalists, and travellers, the yet more intellectual glories of the old world are still being discovered, elucidated, and confirmed. The results of these discoveries are either communicated or transferred to the chief European cities. Neither Asia, Africa, nor America takes much interest in them. America, both North and South, representing the inherited intelligence of British, Spanish, and Portuguese nations, and steadily increasing in influential importance, yet seems devoted to the future alone. Possessing no verified ancient history or literature, but merely the vague traditions of extirpated or subjected races, the ruling castes, chiefly descended from Europeans, yet, living far from the old world, except in rare instances, show little interest in its antiquities or revelations.

The policy, enterprise, and thoughts of American nations are naturally devoted to future development. The barbarism and poverty of the greater part of

Africa, and the almost unchangeable nature of Asiatic nations, when uninfluenced by Europeans, still delay their progress in civilisation. Japan alone among so many larger Asiatic countries seems to either imitate or naturally resemble European civilisation in many ways to a remarkable and peculiar degree. The Japanese, totally unlike their comparatively unchangeable Chinese neighbours, cultivate and trust Europeans with a cordiality almost unknown to other Asiatic races, and while retaining their ancestral religion, seem completely free from either religious bigotry or political ambition, at least in an aggressive sense. Among European and modern American nations there appears also an energetic enterprise, independent of either military ambition or religious zeal. These great incentives to human exploits chiefly animated all ancient nations in Europe and Asia during wars and conquests. Modern Europe and America, alone in the world's history, show a spirit of determined energy and daring enterprise, uninspired by these motives.

While the military, naval, and diplomatic resources of Europe maintain political supremacy, the researches of its learned, enterprising travellers proceed with safety and success, yet often without any design of territorial conquest or religious conversion. To European enlightenment, therefore, the revelations of the old, like the discovery of the new, world, seem entirely due. The descendants of ancient Egyptians and Assyrians, almost like the natives of America and Australasia, are comparatively ignorant and

passive during modern discovery and research in their lands.

Europeans, guided and enlightened by classic information, control and direct their manual exertions in elucidating the past history and departed glories of those countries they ignorantly inhabit. European cities, London especially, in museums, exhibitions, and public attention, receive and appreciate all valuable discoveries made in countries whose native inhabitants remain in comparative ignorance about them. Thus the influence of British literature in translation, history, and travel seems specially to produce, appreciate, and reward the splendid and increasing results of modern intellectual acquisition.